

Revelation

The Church at Pergamos

- Orientation:
 - The city was located 16 miles inland from the Aegean Sea, two miles north of the Caicus River (modern Bakir Cay) in southern Mysia.
 - It was about 57 miles north of Izmir, built on a precipice about 1165 feet above sea level, one thousand feet above the surrounding plain.
- Orientation (Cont.):
 - Today, the modern Turkish town of Bergama (population 45,000) surrounds the ancient precipice, and partially covers the ruins of Roman Pergamum.
- Early History:
 - The city became prominent in the Hellenistic Period. Lysimachus, a successor to Alexander the Great, deposited 9,000 talents of gold for war expenses with a regional General named Philetaerus.
 - The General revolted against the rule of Thrace, and when news came of the death of Lysimachus in 232 BCE, Philetaerus used the 9,000 talents to set up his own kingdom, calling it the Attalid Kingdom (named after the nephew of Philetaerus).

- Roman Pergamos:
 - Pergamum became the capital of Asia, as the first city to make an alliance with Rome.
 - Ephesus became the capital of the province, but scholars have argued that this city remained the focal point of the worship of the Roman Emperors.
 - The city lost its great library to Alexandria when Mark Antony gave it to Cleopatra.
 - Its impressive temples, library, and medical facilities made Pergamum a renowned cultural and political center.
 - Parchment, an animal skin prepared for writing on, was first made here, and was called by the Greeks “pergamene”, from the name of the city.
 - By the time Revelation was written, Pergamum had become part of the Roman Empire, but because of its location and importance, the Romans used it as an administrative center for the province of Asia.
 - The provincial capital, it was one of the few cities granted the power by Rome to inflict capital punishment.
 - This was known as "the right of the sword."

- The Church:
 - The Gospel probably reached the city at the time of Paul's extended stay in Ephesus during his third missionary journey (52-57 AD) and, by the end of the 2nd century AD, Pergamum had become an important Christian center. But, with the weakening of Roman power, the city went into economic decline and lost much of its importance.

- The Letter to the Church:
 - **THE LORD'S SELF-DESIGNATION (12)**
 - "Who has the sharp two-edged sword"
 - Christ as the one "who wields the sharp sword with the double edge" and as one who will fight "with the sword of (his) mouth," John was telling the Pergamum church that Christ wielded greater power than either the provincial rulers or the Roman emperors!
 - **COMMENDATION (13)**
 - He knows their works, and where they dwell, where Satan's throne is.
 - Satan's throne was most likely the temple to Augustus (Emperor)
 - For holding fast to His name.
 - Despite the pressure to worship the emperor, they held fast to His name.
 - For not denying His faith even when Antipas was killed among them.
 - Tradition has it that Antipas was martyred in 92AD
 - More evidence to the dating of the book.
 - Despite what was most likely a traumatic event for the Christians, they held on to their faith.

● CONDEMNATION AND WARNING (14-16)

● Condemnation

- They have those who hold the doctrine of Balaam
 - Who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before Israel
 - To eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality.
 - By holding on to the doctrine of Balaam they were committing the same sins.
- They have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which He hates

● Warning

- Repent or He will come to them quickly
- He will fight against them with the sword of His mouth

● EXHORTATION AND PROMISE (17)

- Hear what the Spirit says to the churches
- To him who overcomes, He will give...
 - Some of the hidden manna to eat.
 - Just as in the wilderness, He will provide for their every need spiritually.
 - The idols and false doctrines could not provide for them what He could.

- A white stone with a new name written on it which no one knows except he who receives it
 - Probably refers to a custom of the courts during that time.
 - Judges were given two stones
 - Black represented guilty.
 - White represented innocent.
 - The Lord will vote “Innocent” to those who overcome.
 - It would stand to reason that the name on the stone would be that of the individual.

● Life Application:

- The church allowed sin to dwell among them
 - Those practicing the “Doctrine of Balaam”
 - We do this when we....
 - Place our material things before God.
 - Place our careers before God.
 - Give God what’s left of our time.
 - Give in to our sexual or physical desires
 - The Church is guilty by knowing these things are going on and not confronting them.
 - The sin of omission!

- Those holding to the doctrine of the Nicholaitians.
 - Teaching false doctrines.
 - Allowing them to continue.
 - Lack of care.
 - Lack of study.
 - Lack of confidence.
- When overlooking sin, we lack love!
 - For the Father
 - For our Brethren
- Jesus promises hope.
 - If we overcome, he will find us innocent.
 - He is our advocate.
 - He will be in our midst when we confront and attempt to restore our brother (Mat 18:15-20)