

The Messages of Jesus to the 7 Churches

The Church at Pergamum

Revelation 2:12-17

Introduction: Briefly review the letters to Ephesus and Smyrna, focusing on the rebuke of the Lord for believers at Ephesus leaving their first love and on Smyrna's faith amidst great poverty and trial showing that they were rich.

Mention again that John lived and served God in Ephesus for many years and knew all of these 7 churches well. He was on the island prison of Patmos only about 80 kilometers (50 miles) into the sea from Ephesus.

We will now study the next letter to the believers at Pergamum.

Read Revelation 2:12-17

The Description of Jesus: (2:12)

"The one who has the sharp two-edged sword"

- The words of Jesus are described as being like a sword. What are swords for? They are for fighting, destroying, and doing battle. A sword is a symbol of power and strength. The words of Jesus are powerful and they accomplish all of His purposes. In Genesis 1 the word of God created the universe; in Revelation 19 it tells us that Jesus at His second coming will destroy the nations of the earth with His word like a sword.

APPLICATION: *The Word of God gives life or death to us, depending on whether or not we receive and follow those words. We must receive the Word of God in obedience and faith. Remember this as Jesus gives us His word in this passage.*

Praise from Jesus to the Church of Pergamum (2:13):

Endurance & Faithfulness

"Yet you hold fast my name, and you did not deny my faith/your faith in me"

- Jesus knew how spiritually dark the city of Pergamum was. Jesus called that city "where Satan's throne is" and "where Satan dwells." The believers at Pergamum were in a very dark place and Satan's power was great there. It was oppressive to them and resulted in times of persecution. There was one time of great persecution where a well-known believer named Antipas was killed. Even during that time of intense persecution, the believers of Pergamum stayed faithful and did not deny their faith in Christ. Jesus praises them for their faithful endurance.

APPLICATION: *We see in these first two chapters of Revelation how that Jesus keeps showing to us that He knows our trials and He knows our difficulties because of our faith in Him. Here again Jesus says "I know." We have a God that is near us and never leaves us. He will reward all of our faithfulness through our*

trials. We will never be put in a place that God's grace cannot help us to stay faithful to Him. No place is too dark to shine for Christ through His strength.

Rebuke from Jesus to the Church of Pergamum (2:14-15):

- Review the story of Balaam (Numbers 22-25; 31:16)

1. Toleration of false teaching

- They were tolerating the teachings of Balaam and the teachings of the Nicolaitans. This means that they were allowing false teachers and false Christians to teach and spread false teachings among the believers there in Pergamum. They were not rebuking these false teachers. They were not disciplining the unrepentant from their fellowship.
- These false teachers were using Christianity for personal gain, whether it was wealth or power. They were using the Christians. Their false teaching encouraged the Christians to live in sin and live like the world. It encouraged them to follow the way of Satan and the way of God at the same time. Because these false teachers were allowed to remain, it affected the holiness of the church.

2. Toleration of sin

- The teaching of Balaam and the Nicolaitans had caused the church to be full of sin. The sin of Balaam was encouraging God's people to be involved in sexual sin and idolatry. The church was not correcting those who were sinning and they were not disciplining out of the fellowship those who were like the world. Jesus said that He was against them because of this. Jesus hates the tolerance of false teaching and the toleration of sin in His church!

APPLICATION: We must be careful to be on the watch for wolves in sheep's clothing who are looking to use our church for their own personal gain. Almost always those who are false teachers lead God's people into sin, just like Balaam did to Israel. This is the teaching of 2 Peter 2 and Jude as well. Jesus Christ HATES the toleration of unfaithfulness and sin among those that profess His name. His wrath & anger is against those that allow false teachings and tolerate sexual sins and other serious sins among church members. Jesus instructs us to discipline those that refuse to repent out of our fellowship (1 Corinthians 5).

Call by Jesus to the Church of Pergamum to Repent (2:16):

- This sin of tolerance of false teaching and of sin in the church made Jesus very angry. If His people do not repent and remove the false teaching and those that are living in sin from their fellowship, Jesus said that He will come to them very soon and "war against them with

the sword of my mouth.” Jesus will destroy those false teachers and will allow the spiritual death of those churches that tolerate sin and false teaching.

APPLICATION: We must take this command of Jesus very seriously. It is a warning that if we tolerate false teaching and sin our church that Jesus will war against us! There are many, many churches that tolerate false teachers and sin. Many churches will not remove unrepentant professors to Christianity from their fellowships. As a result, Jesus will judge the false teachers and those that follow them. Those that tolerate them will find that their spiritual life grows weak and their light for Christ fades away. Those who obey these words of Jesus are often called “Fundamentalists” and “Legalists” simply because they do what God says here. The reason why we are a part of Baptists for Cambodia and not a part of the Evangelical Fellowship of Cambodia is this very same issue. We cannot have close fellowship with false teachers and open sin against God.

Reward for Conquerors (2:17):

- 1. They will be given hidden manna**—Just as God sustained His people in the wilderness with manna in the desert God will give sustaining grace that never runs out to His people forever in heaven. We are often tired, weary, and sometimes hungry or in pain here in this life. We will genuine rest and peace through His care forever in heaven.
- 2. They will be given a white stone**—In ancient Middle-Eastern days, voting was often decided by casting stones into a bowl. Each person had a white stone and a black stone. If it was a trial of whether or not a person was guilty, each person who thought the person innocent would cast in a white stone, and those who thought the person was guilty would cast in a black stone. Those that conquer will receive a white stone from Jesus, meaning that he/she will be accepted and approved by God.
- 3. They will be given a new name**—Each conqueror will be given a special name by God that only he and God knows, a name with special meaning to them. This shows us that we will have a very close relationship with God that is not hindered by sin. We will know God far more than we know Him now.

APPLICATION: God will take care of us for all of eternity. He will meet all of our needs. He will receive us and accept us because of the blood of His Son, Jesus Christ. He will accept our faith and obedience and will receive us to Himself and fellowship with us for all of eternity. Take comfort in the rest that we will enjoy forever with God.