

“Where Satan Dwells: Pergamum”

(Rev 2:12-17)



Truth Matters Church, Inc.

The Seven Churches of Revelation



A brief look *in Scripture*: Pergamum



- ❧ 4 of 7 churches: Smyrna/Pergamum/Sardis/Philadelphia are not directly mentioned apart from Revelation
 - ❧ Only Ephesus, Thyatira, Laodicea
- ❧ All 7 churches are in ancient Asia Minor so what we can do is look for clues
- ❧ Like Smyrna (not mentioned), it's possible that this church was founded upon
 - ❧ a. The preaching of the apostle Peter
 - ❧ Great Sermon, acts of the apostles
 - ❧ b. The preaching of the apostle Paul
 - ❧ Missionary journeys; 2+ year stay in Ephesus
 - ❧ c. Believers were scattered and settled there due to persecution
 - ❧ The great persecution began under Nero, continued to Domitian
 - ❧ d. The preaching of John
 - ❧ Peter and John tag teamed quite a bit in Acts

A brief look *in History*: Pergamum



- ❧ Overlooks modern town Bergama, which is in the province of Izmir, Turkey off coast of N. Aegean Sea
 - ❧ Same province as Smyrna
- ❧ First mentioned in 400BC
 - ❧ By ancient Greek historian Xenophon (student of Socrates)
 - ❧ Served under Cyrus the Younger (a Persian prince)
- ❧ After the death of Alexander the Great, Empire was divided among 4 generals, Pergamum eventually became a kingdom under the Attalid dynasty
 - ❧ "Kingdom of Pergamum"



A brief look *in History*: Pergamum



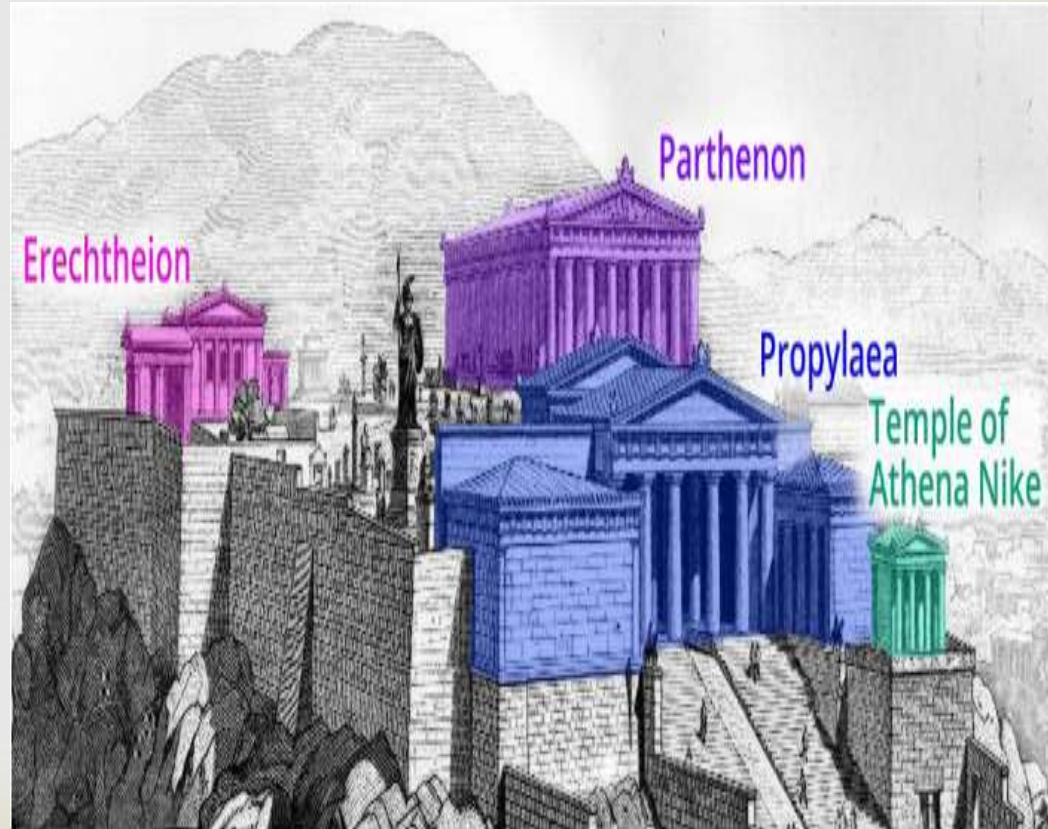
- ❧ Rome inherited Pergamum upon Attalus III's death 133BC
- ❧ Rome made it the capital of Asia
 - ❧ It's population 100k+
- ❧ By the time Revelation was written, Pergamum was not the capital city, Ephesus was, but was nonetheless the 2nd most important city after Ephesus
- ❧ According to Josephus, no evidence that a synagogue has been found
 - ❧ "synagogue of Satan" would not apply here as it did for Smyrna



A brief look *in History*: Pergamum



- ❧ Pergamum was entrenched in Greek Hellenistic culture
- ❧ Thus, it had one of the largest altars in the ancient world
- ❧ In fact, there were many temples and shrines dedicated to the Olympian gods, goddesses, including, Zeus, Dionysus, Asklepius, Athena, kings of Pergamum, and Roman Emperors (Claudius, Trajan)



A brief look *in History*: Pergamum



- ☞ Just like Ephesus had a theatre, so did Pergamum which could seat 10K-15K
- ☞ Just as Smyrna was known for the commodity myrrh, Pergamum was a major producer of parchment
 - ☞ In Latin, parchment is derived from the city's name
 - ☞ It once held over 200k+ manuscripts
- ☞ Just as Ephesus was considered the great city of the goddess Artemis, Pergamum was considered the great city of the Greek gods and goddesses with Zeus and Athena as prominent figures



A brief look *in History*: Pergamum



- ❧ Other things to note: Pergamum was an ancient location of healing
- ❧ The Asklepion at Pergamum was the “hospital” in ancient times
- ❧ If you wanted healing, the Asklepion was the place to go and visit
- ❧ The Asklepion dates as far back as 4th century BC and is named after the god of medicine and healing
- ❧ The god of Asklepion’s symbol was a rod wrapped with snakes
 - ❧ Depicted on stone column →



A brief look *in History*: Pergamum



- ❧ In fact, even many of the symbols for modern medicine is influenced by the rod (staff) of Asklepion
 - ❧ 1or2 snakes wrapping around a rod or staff
- ❧ Snakes in ancient times were associated with the god of healing
 - ❧ Interestingly similar to Moses and bronze serpent account
- ❧ So in summary...



A brief look *in History*: Pergamum



- ❧ The healing temple in Pergamum was dedicated to and named after Asklepion
- ❧ This healing temple was their “hospital” and it was entrenched with idolatry, witchcraft and sorcery
 - ❧ Pagan priests and physicians
- ❧ Those hoping for healing (including Roman Emperors) would come to the Asklepion, undergo a ritual cleansing, offer sacrifices, drink a potion (medicine), induce a sleep or trance in a dark room or dungeon full of snakes waiting for a dream from the Asklepius
 - ❧ Some sort of dream therapy and communing with the gods
- ❧ All this is to say, Pergamum had a lot of activity going on going as far back as Socrates (around 400BC) and continued after Revelation was written and was a place heavily influenced by Greek mythology, ideologies, and idol worship

Scripture Reading



Revelation 2:12-17 (NASB)

12 “And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write:

The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this:

13 ‘I know where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. 14 But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality. 15 So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

Scripture Reading



16 Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth. 17 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.'

Exposit 2:12



12 “And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write:
The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this:

☞ “to the angel” appointed over this church

☞ “sharp two-edged sword”

☞ In Rev 1:16 it came out of his mouth

☞ In Rev 2:23 Jesus possesses it

☞ In our Glorified Son of Man study, we learned that when looking to Scripture, this phrase means Jesus is ready to execute vengeance and judgment against those who rebel against Him



Exposit 2:12



13 'I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

- ☞ "I know (oida)" have full knowledge on where they live
- ☞ "Satan's throne" [more on this]
- ☞ "days of Antipas" [more on this]
- ☞ "where Satan dwells" [more on this]

“Satan’s Throne”



- ❧ We’ve learned that there is only One throne in heaven and that belongs to God the Father
 - ❧ Jesus has authority to sit on it; but it is and will always belong to His Father
- ❧ We’ve learned that Jesus sat down (kaitzo) on the right hand of the Father to sit and preside as God’s King & High Priest
- ❧ We’ve learned that the Father desired to give Jesus His very own throne, and thus, established that through the Davidic Covenant
- ❧ It should be no surprise then, that whatever God does, Satan tries to usurp
- ❧ The truth in v. 12 is that Satan has a throne
- ❧ And out of all places, it was in Pergamum
- ❧ So what is/was that throne?

“Satan’s Throne”



- ❧ First let’s look to the grammar Jesus said “I know where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is”
 - ❧ Although “is” is not italicized in NASB, it is italicized in KJV, NKJV meaning it was added so that it reads in English
- ❧ “Satan’s throne” is in the definite article, this throne belongs to Satan
- ❧ Meaning in context, Satan’s throne was a present reality to the believers in Pergamum
- ❧ Many if not most commentaries and teachings say that Satan’s throne was the temple of Zeus
 - ❧ i.e. Zeus was the god of gods (Olympian Gods), lord of lords, king of kings
- ❧ From here I’d like to see a model of Pergamum’s acropolis to get a visual

Model of the Pergamon Acropolis

Temple to Trajan

Library

Sacred Square &
Temple of Athena

Temple of Zeus

Theatre --->

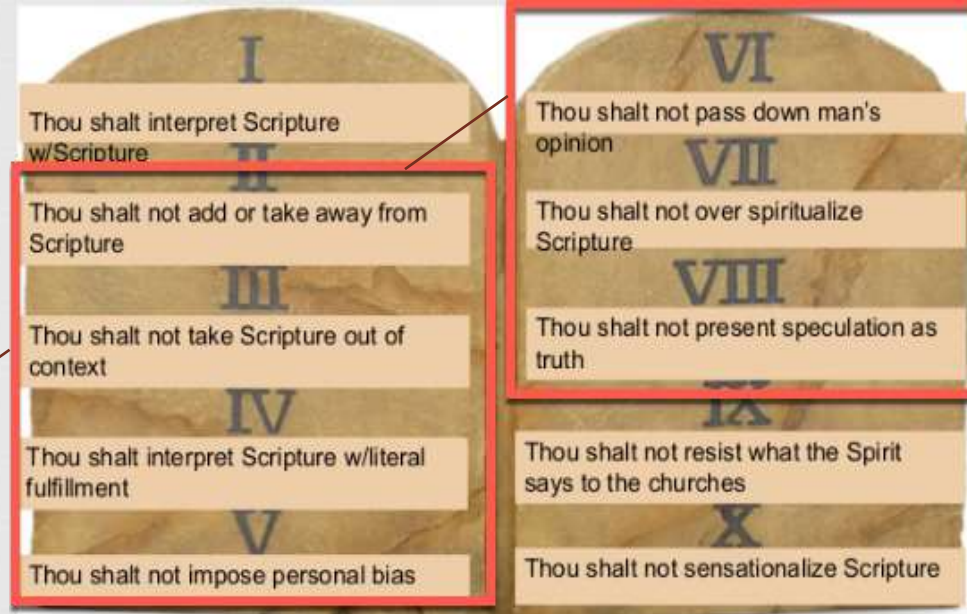
Temple of Dionysis --->



“Satan’s Throne”



- ❧ Here is where I struggle in saying that Satan’s throne was the temple of Zeus
- ❧ For starters, the temple of Zeus did NOT have a throne, it had an altar
 - ❧ Some will argue despite that, it is shaped kind of like a throne
- ❧ But this violates several of our ROEs



“Satan’s Throne”



- ✧ Again, Jesus said “Satan’s throne” in the definite article
- ✧ Jesus did NOT say Satan’s “altar” (“where Satan’s altar is”)
- ✧ To demonstrate throne vs. altar are different, I’d like to refer to Rev 8:3
Revelation 8:3 (after the breaking of the 7th Seal)
3 Another angel came and stood at the altar (thusiastērion), holding a golden censer; and much incense was given to him, so that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar (thusiastērion) which was **before** the throne (kronos).
- ✧ This was the only time both altar + throne were used in the same verse
- ✧ It’s clear that the altar is NOT the throne, it is BEFORE the throne

“Satan’s Throne”



- ❧ Since none of the temples in Pergamum, to my knowledge, had an actual throne (thronos), I can’t say that Jesus was referring to any of those temples, whether it be Zeus or any of the other temples or shrines
 - ❧ Yes, Satanic and demon worship was prevalent, Satan was definitely there and present, but none of them had a throne, just altars
- ❧ So what is Satan’s throne?
 - ❧ I’M STUMPED
- ❧ Perhaps it was prophecy
- ❧ Perhaps this insight will be given us as we progress further into our studies
- ❧ Now if Caesar’s throne was in Pergamum and he lived there, then I’ll consider that
- ❧ For now, I’m going to leave it there

“days of Antipas”



Jesus mentions an early hero of the faith, a man by the name of Antipas:
13 ‘I know where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

- ❧ Jesus commended them for not disowning faith in Him and His Name (onoma; authority) “even in the days of Antipas”
- ❧ Who’s Antipas?
- ❧ Well whoever he was must have lived and been killed prior to the penning of this letter (“in the days of”)
 - ❧ Before 95/96 AD
- ❧ Because by this time he “was killed” (past tense) not “will be killed” (future)

“days of Antipas”



- ❧ Church tradition tells us
 - ❧ That Antipas was a disciple of John
 - ❧ Just like Polycarp of Smyrna was a disciple of John
 - ❧ Antipas was a bishop in Pergamum during Nero's reign (54-68AD)
 - ❧ We learned that the intense persecution of Christians began under Nero
 - ❧ Antipas preached about Christ and against idol worship
 - ❧ Pagan priests hotly contested him and the gospel
 - ❧ Ultimately, Antipas was apprehended and burned to death in one of the pagan temples (purportedly on a bull shaped altar)

“days of Antipas”



- ✧ Thus, it is likely, that Antipas, along with Peter and Paul were killed during the persecution of the church under the reign of Nero
- ✧ Jesus commended them for not disowning Him “even in the days of Antipas” His “witness” and “faithful one” was killed for believing and preaching the gospel in a perverse and adulterous generation

UNIVERSAL TRUTH: Jesus is fully aware and commends all who have died for believing and preaching the gospel and will receive us in favor and reward us for our faithfulness

“where Satan dwells”



☞ “dwells” is katoikeō which means to live or settle

☞ Pergamum is not only where Satan’s throne is, but where Satan dwells/lives/settled

TRUTH: Although Satan is an angel, is a spirit in the heavenlies, he dwells on earth

☞ At least at the penning of this letter, Satan lived in Pergamum

☞ Can “Satan’s throne” be synonymous with “where Satan dwells”, yes, I suppose, because they are connected

☞ Just like the Father’s throne and heaven (where He dwells) are connected

☞ But again, throne means throne 100% of the time. Jesus will sit on one, so perhaps, this is prophecy of Satan (Antichrist) sitting on one too