

# Pergamos : The Compromising Church

- 60 miles North of Smyrna
- For 400 years it had been the capital of Asia Minor
- It was near the ancient city of Troy.
- It had a number of pagan temples, with the best known on the acropolis (the highest point in the city). It was a 40 foot altar to the Greek god Zeus.
- Pergamos was known for having a vast library of 200 volumes until Anthony gave them to Cleopatra in Egypt as a gift.

## Characteristics:

### 1. Description of Jesus (2:12)

#### a. Jesus is “he that hath the sharp sword with two edges”?

- i. What is a two-edged sword?** It is a Roman lean and mean killing machine. It had two blades, unlike our standard kitchen knives. You could swing it through, back, and slice both times.
- ii. Someone read Revelation 19:15 and 19:21: Is Jesus really riding around shooting literal swords out of his mouth like in a video game? What does the sword represent?** This is the word of God coming from the mouth of Jesus to slay the wicked. **Do you think there is going to be a huge war where Jesus leads the angels and us into a bloody battle against Satan and his demons?** God created the universe with a simple word, a simple thought, and can put an end to Satan, his army, and evil itself as well with a simple word or thought.
- iii. This sword is double-edged. Hebrews tells us “the Word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword.” What could be the two purposes?** The word of God holds the plan to free us from the bondage of sin (It can separate you from the power of sin through Christ). It will also one day separate believers from unbelievers when it looks deep inside each person’s heart.

### 2. Praises (2:13)

- a. What does Jesus “know”?** “Thy works...holding fast to His name, has not denied my faith, even when they say Antipas slaughtered where Satan dwelleth.” **There is a lot to take in from this verse...**
  - i. Jesus knows where “Satan’s Seat” is:** This is literally “Satan’s Throne” in the Greek. It is almost certainly a reference to the great altar of Zeus at Pergamos. It is a representation of idolatry and a temple where indescribable things were done in the name of Zeus. Jesus is saying, I am aware that it is not easy being a Christian where you are living. You’re in the center of the idolatry, Satan’s Throne! **Is Jesus fully aware of the challenges and hardships you face in your walk right this very moment?**
  - ii. While many evil things have been done in the name of some false god, we know these gods to be fake, so what “power” is truly behind any false god or diety/false teaching?** There is no Zeus, no Diana, etc..., those are imaginary deities with no evidence or proof behind their existence. They are not in the

same category as the God of the Bible. Through hundreds of amazing prophecies that occurred exactly as told, well documented and publically visible miracles, seen by thousands of people, that defy the laws of nature as we know it, creation of the universe and life itself, and so much more; GOD HAS GIVEN THE WORLD WHAT IT NEEDS TO KNOW HE IS THE ONE AND ONLY TRUE GOD. No other religious gods can provide the evidence and proof that the Hebrew God of the Bible can. But if there is a Satan, and most the world would rather act like he does not exist. This is the true force behind any “god” or “belief” that is not what God teaches. Don’t be fooled!!

- iii. **Jesus knows about “Antipas”:** This name literally means “against all”, and must be an unknown martyr “witness” at Pergamos that was slain for all to see at the altar of Zeus. Secular history tells us he was just an everyday man, a dentist, who refused to bow down and worship the emperor so they hollowed out a brass bull replica, stuck him in it, and roasted him alive. **Jesus is saying, I saw this happen and I will have the last word on this evil, not the ones that carved out the brass bull, not the emperor, and not Satan either, I WILL. So how serious do your challenges look now compared to Antipas?** If you’re like me, those things that keep me from witnessing and doing what’s right look very shallow against those that have truly experienced hardships.
- iv. **William Barkley once said “The principle of the Christian life is not escape, but its conquest” What is he trying to say?** Some churches think they just need to withdraw and stay in their huddle with other Christians bunkered away until Jesus comes back again. They think we do not need to associate with the world and those in it else, we might dirty ourselves. God has not called us to escape but to conquest! **If we are the “salt” of the world, what good is salt if it never leaves the saltshaker? If we are the “light” of the world, what good is a candle if it isn’t taken out of the drawer to be used in the darkness?**

### 3. Admonitions (2:14-17)

#### a. There were two false doctrines the church was buying into:

- i. **“doctrine of Balaam”:** Does anyone remember anywhere else in the Bible it talks about Balaam? Peter references in this doctrine in his writings, and specifically, it can be found in Numbers 22-25. **Who was Balaam?** Here is the quick run-down. Balaam was a prophet for hire for the right price available to anybody willing to pay. So the King of Moab, named Balak, hired him to curse Israel. Well, Balaam figured out real fast that was not a wise thing to do against God’s chosen people. Balaam did give the king some advice. He told him if you really want to get to them, have them intermarry with the people of Moab and it will weaken their nation and dilute their faith.
  - 1. **What could Jesus be admonishing the church of Pergamos for based on the “doctrines of Balaam”?** The Israelites had compromised and tried to mix and match the ways of the world with the ways of God and now the church of Pergamos was doing the same.

2. **In what ways specifically were some of those in the church of Pergamos compromising?** They were eating things sacrificed to idols (worshipping false Gods) and fornicating (sexual perversions).
3. **Do you think God allows room for the church to compromise on truth issues with the world?** You can't play the middle ground and expect to come out unscathed. Although we are imperfect, we have to seek the ways of God and not compromise in what we do.
4. **Does God care about what the skin color, or race, someone is that you date or marry?** Absolutely not. Jesus is not talking about this. **Does Jesus care about the condition of someone's heart that you may date or even marry one day?** Absolutely! While there may be a chance you lead your bf or gf, husband or wife, to Jesus, it is not very often that happens. Most often, the opposite happens and the unbeliever drags you down instead of you lifting them up. If you get involved in a relationship with an unbeliever, there will come a point that your beliefs will not match theirs. There will come a point they may entice you into doing something that is against your beliefs. God loves you and is looking out for your best interest, and He knows the problems that will occur when two worlds (heaven and earth) collide. **Maybe you say, c'mon, I'm just a teenager dating, it's not like I'm getting married to them. But remember this, at some point in your life, one of your "dates" will turn into multiple "dates" and eventually somebody down the road that you "date" will become the one you marry.**
  - b. **Holding the ways of the Nicolaitanes:** Many bible scholars believe that this sect of false teachings was founded by Nicholas who was mentioned in Acts 6:5, who was one of the first seven deacons chosen by the early church. This doctrine was a false teaching that allowed Christians to engage in sexual immorality and to participate in the Pagan feasts of these false gods. **How did they come to this conclusion?**
    - i. **They distorted Christian Liberty:** They took the idea that since they are free in Christ, they are free to do anything. I mean, salvation brings forgiveness for all past, present, and future sins, right??? **Let me ask you. As a Christian, are you under the Law anymore? Are you tied to the 10 commandments for your salvation or are you FREE from the laws?** Paul clearly tells us in Ephesians that we are "*called to freedom*", but the Nicolaitanes stopped there and ran with it, distorting scripture. Paul continues by saying "*but don't your freedom for an opportunity for the flesh, but through love, serve one another*". You are saved by GRACE. You don't have to carry around the chains of your past mistakes and mistakes you will make. **Isn't that awesome!! Doesn't that bring relief?? Your free, so your free to do what you want? The law is no longer your master, so that means your free of a master or allegiance to anyone? Right?** Sorry, that is very WRONG! We MUST HONOR the sacrifice made by Jesus and the grace he gives us is the grace given to do God's will in our lives. You DO NOT have to live in the shadow of your mistakes and imperfections anymore, but you do have to live striving to follow the will of your leader, Jesus Christ.

- ii. **They embraced Gnosticism:** In short, they believed that your flesh, your body, is sinful and there is nothing you can do about it. They believed anything good can only be in your spirit, so guess what, you don't have any control over your body sinning. **Doesn't this sound completely absurd? Talk about distorting scripture. Does God care about what you do with your body? Do you have control over what you do with your body?** Absolutely. This is distorting scripture to the maximum!!
- c. **What's the remedy for this? Repent!** Once again, Jesus is pleading to them to repent before it is too late. **What does it mean to repent? Can you really repent without action?** Repent means to turn and start heading the opposite way away from sin. Repenting is not just saying I'm sorry and not doing anything about it.
- d. **Promises for those that overcome:**
  - i. **The "hidden manna":** refers to the divine food that was preserved in the ark of the Covenant; the "bread of life". You will be given new life.
  - ii. **A "white stone":** Colored stones were used in courts to signify either guilt or innocence. **What do you think the black stone stood for? What about the white stone?**
  - iii. **A "new name":** God seems to promise a new name appropriate to each of our different type of character and service, just as Abraham and Israel were granted new names. Maybe this is an additional name such as the disciples received? No one can know for sure.

# Thyatira : The Apostate Church

- 40 miles east of Pergamos
- Lydia, whom Paul met at Philippi, was from Thyratia. Since there is no record of Paul travelling to Thatira, it is a possibility that Lydia may have returned from Philippi and played a major role in founding the church there.
- This letter is the central and longest of the seven letters even though Thyatira was the least significant city in Asia Minor
- This is a blue collar town, full of laborers of different trades

## Characteristics:

### 4. Description of Jesus (2:18)

- a. Jesus has “eyes like a flame of fire and feet like fine brass”:
- b. **One of the chief false dieties in Thyratia was the sun god Tyrimnus. Why do you think this particular description of Jesus was appropriate to the church of Thyratia?** The image of Tyrimnus tried to portray he was the “SUN” god. This description is telling the believers at Tyrimnus He was the only true Son of God unlike the false god Tyrimnus. (eyes as fire means he see everything that is happening, bronze feet as that of a warrior ready to battle)

### 5. Praises (2:19)

- a. **What does Jesus “know”?** their good deeds, love for others, trust in God, service for the Saviour, patient endurance in trials, and zealousness.

### 6. Admonitions (2:20-29)

- a. **Thou “sufferest that woman Jezebel”:** Jezebel had been the pagan queen of Israel in the days of Elijah who introduced Baal worship into Israel (1 Kings 16:30-33). **Is this really Jezebel here back from the dead?** Apparently a similar seductress had infiltrated the church and was in leadership. She taught in ways that gave members the license to sin and break God’s commandments in the name of love, faith, and good works.
- b. **How exactly were the people of Thyatira trying to mix the things of God with the things of the world?**
  - i. Persuaded members they could worship God and Tyrimnus at the same time.
  - ii. In Thyatira, the blue-collared workers had to be part of a guild to work and provide for their family. (Like having to be in a union to work somewhere) To be a member in the guild, you had to worship Tyrimnus and participate in pagan festivals. In other words “God doesn’t want you to go hungry, so He won’t mind if you engage in immoral worship of a pagan diety to provide for your family.”
- c. **Is God ok if you sin if you do it in the name of love, faith, or good works? Thyatira had the ingredients to be a great church, but could not find the right balance between a love for others and a love for truth. In what ways does this happen with Christians today as well?**
  - i. Anyone remember a little bakery that refused to make a cake for a same-sex marriage because it wasn’t against their beliefs? What happened to them??
  - ii. More examples???

- d. **The Lord said he held it against them for “tolerating” this Jezebel wanna be and her teachings. What is tolerance to you? Is tolerance a good or bad thing? Is there such a thing as GOOD tolerance and FALSE tolerance? Consider these scenarios:**
- i. Should you show respect to other people even if you disagree with them? Yes, good tolerance
  - ii. If someone is doing something sinful or harmful that is clearly outside of God’s will, and you want to help lead them back to the right path, should you do it gently, lovingly, and patiently, realizing they may not agree with what you have to say when you approach them? Yes, good tolerance.
  - i. Are all ideas and all behaviors equally valid and true? No, false tolerance.
  - ii. Should Christians judge in a way that makes them out as “better than” others? No!! This is false judgement and not what Christ teaches.
  - iii. Should Christians judge in a way as to identify what God determines as right and wrong? Absolutely, this is true judgement and what Christ teaches.
  - iv. Should Christians be able to judge if a certain lifestyle is sinful or not. Absolutely, this is true judgement and what Christ teaches.
  - v. **Is “We love everybody, and judge nobody” the true Christian way? Yes or No and Why?** Tolerance does not mean we let immorality invade our church, our personal lives, our families, all in the name of “it is not right to judge.” That is just ridiculous. You have to be able to make a “judgement” on what is right according to God’s will and what is wrong according to God’s will. There is a right and wrong way to “tolerate” and a right and wrong way to “judge”. **Do not sacrifice GOD’S TRUTH for TOLERANCE!**

## IN CLOSING

One Native American rite of passage commands that when a boy in that culture is on the verge of manhood, his father will take him into the wilderness for the night with no food, water, and no weapon. The father puts the boy inside a circle about two hundred yards out in any direction. With no explanation, the father instructs his son not to leave the circle no matter how dangerous the night seems. What the boy does not know is that while he shivers the night away, fearful of what he cannot see, his father walks the boundary of the circle all night long, protecting his son. The boy may feel unsafe and alone, but his loving father makes sure no harm comes to his son throughout the night. As long as he stays within that circle, he is safe; but if he leaves the circle, the father is helpless to intervene on his behalf because the boy would wander into the dark wilderness on his own free will, against his father’s will.

This is a good picture of what God is saying to the churches and to you and I. If we go outside the circle of God’s will, we are moving beyond his protection and face judgement on our own. But if we stay within the circle of God’s revealed will and obey what we know to be truth, God provides protection and when the new day comes, we claim our reward in heaven.