

The Seven Church Attitudes Revealed By Christ in the Book of Revelation

Part 3

First let us read the message given to this church, then meditate on what was said and consider the action that needs to be taken by such a Christian or Christian fellowship.

Revelation 2:12-17 [NIV] *“To the angel of the church in Pergamum write: These are the words of him who has the **sharp, double-edged sword**. I know where you live, where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city, where Satan lives. Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: You have people there who hold to **the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak** to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality. Likewise you also have those who hold to **the teaching of the Nicolaitans**. Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give some of the **hidden manna**. I will also give him a **white stone with a new name written on it**, known only to him who receives it.”*

Pergamum was a city built on a hill, 1,000 feet above the surrounding countryside, creating a natural fortress.

Pergamum could never achieve the commercial greatness of Ephesus or of Smyrna. But it was a centre of Greek culture and education, with a famous library of no fewer than 200,000 parchment rolls.

In the ancient world it was second only to the unique library of Alexandria.

Pergamum was also the centre of four Pagan cults and it rivalled Ephesus in its worship of idols.

The city’s chief god was Asclepius, whose symbol was a serpent, and who was considered the god of healing. People came to Pergamum from all over the world to seek healing from this god.

“Sharp double-edged sword” Just as the Romans used their swords for authority and judgement, Jesus’ sharp double-edged sword represented God’s ultimate authority and judgement.

Hebrews 4:12-13 [NIV] *“For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.”*

God’s Word, the Christian Bible, is the sword that God uses with authority and in judgement.

Ephesians 6:17 [NIV] *“Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”*

The Holy Spirit is the One who uses the Word of God to influence us.

The Holy Spirit uses the Word of God to bring us to repentance, shows us where true righteousness is found, and reminds us we all will face the judgement of our Saviour Jesus Christ. [see **John 16:8**]

Matthew 10:34-39 [NIV] *“Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn “a man against his father, a daughter*

against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.' "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."

Acceptance of God's Word, the Christian Bible, as our guide to life will cause division in the society that is, at this time, ruled by Satan.

"I know where you live" The Christians in Pergamum were living in a place where Satan's rule was greatest, a place where Satan exercises most authority.

Jesus Christ did not want these Christians to leave, the word He used was the Greek word "katoikein" meaning permanent residence.

The principle of Christian life is not escape but conquest.

It is the duty of a Christian to witness for Christ where life has set them.

John 17:15-19 [NIV] *"My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified."*

This is Jesus Christ's prayer for all Christians.

The Christians at Pergamum proved that it is perfectly possible to be a Christian even in such hostile, Satan-influenced society.

Even when martyrdom was in the air they did **not** flinch or retreat.

In Pergamum as soon as you became a Christian you had put your life on the line and were liable to face the death of a martyr.

To be a Christian can be a very costly thing.

"The teaching of Balaam" ... "Teaching of Nicolaitans."

The teaching of both these groups was the same, they sought to work out a compromise with paganism.

To allow Christians to take part, without embarrassment, in some of the social and religious activities of the society in which they found themselves.

The Nicolaitans were seeking to adjust Christianity to the level of the world rather than lift the world to the level of Christianity.

In other words, they were following a policy of compromise simply and solely to save themselves from the trouble they were afraid and unwilling to face.

The wrath of Christ was **not** directed against the whole church at Pergamum.

Christ's wrath was directed against those leaders in the church who were misleading, deceiving and seducing the church.

These leaders were doing Satan's work for him.

Matthew 10:38-39 [NIV] *“and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”*

To take up our cross is to follow Christ who sacrificed His will to the will of the Father. [see **Matthew 26:39**]

There is no compromise in this statement made by our Saviour.

The more we love this life’s rewards [leisure, power, popularity, financial security] the more we will discover how empty they really are.

The best way to enjoy life, therefore, is to loosen our greedy grasp on earthly rewards so that we are free to follow Christ.

In doing so we will receive the *“hidden manna”* that is Jesus Christ Himself.

John 6:31-35 [NIV] *“Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’” Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” “Sir,” they said, “from now on give us this bread.” Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.”*

The presence of Jesus Christ in their life is the reward that faithful Christians in Pergamum would receive.

“A white stone” Known by ancients as a victory stone, given to athletes for outstanding performance.

In the Roman culture, most gladiators had to continue to fight in the games arena until they were killed in combat. But if a gladiator had an illustrious and admired career, becoming the darling of the crowds, he was allowed to retire in honour.

Such men were given a white stone with the letters ‘S.P.’ on it. ‘S.P.’ stands for the Latin word “spectatus” which means a proven man of valour.

Thus for a Christian to receive a white stone would mean he had proved himself a valiant fighter [soldier] for Christ and he was allowed to enter into a rest which Christ gives, with honour.

“New name written on it” One of the features of the Old Testament is that giving a new name to a person is to mark a new status.

Abram [high father] became Abraham [father of a multitude].

Jacob [supplanter] became Israel [he will rule].

This is the new status of honour and glory into which a Christian, faithful to Jesus Christ, will enter when this life ends, and eternal life begins.