

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 2-17-13 PM NOTES  
"THE CHURCH THAT COMPROMISED WITH THE WORLD"  
REVELATION 2:12-17  
#5 in Series, "Verse-by-Verse Through Revelation"

**Revelation 1:19 (NKJV)** "Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this."

**John 12:31 (NKJV)** "Now is the judgment of this world; now **the ruler of this world** will be cast out."

**1 Peter 5:8 (NKJV)** "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about **like a roaring lion**, seeking whom he may devour."

I. The Correspondent (v. 12)

**Hebrews 4:12 (HCSB)** "For the word of God is living and effective and sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating as far as to divide soul, spirit, joints, and marrow; it is a judge of the ideas and thoughts of the heart."

**Romans 13:4 (HCSB)** "For government is God's servant to you for good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, because it does not carry the sword for no reason. For government is God's servant, an avenger that brings wrath on the one who does wrong."

II. The Commendation (v. 13)

**Matthew 25:41 (NKJV)** "Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'"

**1 John 5:19 (ESV)** "We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one."

III. The Condemnation (vv. 14-15)

A. Compromise in the Area of Morality and Idolatry (v. 14)

**James 4:4 (NIV)** "You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God."

B. Compromise in the Area of Theology (v. 15)

"Worldliness, compromise, and tolerance had rushed into this church like a flood and she was on the verge of drowning."  
—Danny Aiken

IV. The Command (v. 16)

V. The Counsel (v. 17)

A. The Hidden Manna (v. 17)

**John 6:51 (NKJV)** "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world."

B. The White Stone (v. 17b)

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“THE CHURCH THAT COMPROMISED WITH THE WORLD”  
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The outline for the book of Revelation is found in **Revelation 1:19 (NKJV)** “Write the things which you have seen [that is chapter one – the glorified Christ], and the things which are [this section includes chapters two and three], and the things which will take place after this [this includes the remainder of Revelation and ends with a rather detailed description of the place we will spend eternity called “The New Jerusalem”].” In the section of Revelation we are in now (the things which are), we are looking at seven letters Jesus dictates to John to seven literal churches that are representative of all churches of the whole church age. Today we look at the church at Pergamos or sometimes called Pergamum.

In the first century and still today, the enemy attacks the church in two ways. He attacks with either intimidation or enticement. He uses the threat of persecution and actual persecution to intimidate the church to back off her mission of ordering our beliefs and lives around the Word of God and prioritizing what God has prioritized – making disciples of Jesus Christ. Intimidation was the tactic he used with the church at Smyrna. Satan’s tactic of intimidation didn’t work with the church at Smyrna. This is one of the two churches that Jesus had nothing negative, nothing corrective to say. The devil used the tactic of enticement with the church at Pergamum and he was successful with many in the church. Let’s look a little more in depth at this tactic of enticement – enticement to what? Basically it is the enticement to compromise with the world system in which the church exists. As we have seen over and over, the “world” when used in the negative sense is not a place; it is a value system that has its values set by Satan who is called “the ruler of this world” (John 12:31). To re-phrase this two-fold attack of the enemy, if Satan can’t destroy the effectiveness of the church coming as **a roaring lion** seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8), he will come as **an angel of light** (2 Corinthians 11:14) to entice the church to worldliness.

The enticement of the world system (orchestrated by Satan) is very powerful. We saw in recent days this power to entice to conformity to the world’s values with the Boy Scouts. While the Boy Scouts are certainly not a church, they are an organization that has stood for morality that has a biblical basis. The Boy Scout oath says, “On my honor I will do my best to do my duty to God and my country and to obey the Scout law; to help other people at all times; to keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight” The Boy Scouts have stood firm against the world’s pressures to knuckle under to various movements including the homosexual movement. Just 6 months ago, the Boy Scouts of America’s (B. S. A.) national board announced that no change will be made to the current national policy of prohibiting participation of openly homosexual members and leaders. Now we are told they are likely going to change that. The proposed new policy amounts to a local option, with each Boy Scout unit determining its own policy with relation to members or leaders who are openly homosexual. The national organization of the Boy Scouts will “under no circumstances” dictate a national policy on the question of homosexuality. This change has come about after massive pressure from “gay rights” activists and their allies. Back in 2004 the B. S. A. maintained that homosexual conduct is “inconsistent” with the “morally straight” requirement of the scout oath. Now they may be going to claim to have no position on the issue of homosexual behavior. [Taken from Al Mohler’s Blog, AlbertMohler.com 1-31-13, “Limping Between Two Opinions: The Moral Evacuation of the Boy Scouts of America”]. Just a few days ago, because of upset people on both sides of the issue, the board of the B. S. A. put off making a final decision for several months. Again, I realize that the Boy Scouts are not a church, but the way the enemy has orchestrated this conformity to the world and the pressure he has put on this organization is an example of how he seeks to entice and pressure the church. In my opinion, the church fares much better under persecution than it does under the enticement of the world. That is why the church in countries that face persecution often prays for the church in America. Joseph Tson, a persecuted leader in the church in

Romania in their communist days said that the church in America faced a greater challenge than the persecuted church in Romania. To put it another way, Satan seems to win more victories as an angel of light than he does as a roaring lion going about seeking whom he may devour.

Let's look at a little background concerning this church at Pergamum. The city of Pergamum exists today in Turkey and is known as Bergama. The ancient city was located about 100 miles north of Ephesus with Smyrna located about half way in between Pergamum and Ephesus. Much of Pergamum was built on a large hill towering about 1,000 feet above the plain. Pergamum's library of some 200,000 **handwritten** volumes was the second largest library in the Roman Empire (only Alexandria was larger). The city was a real center of pagan worship. At least four Pagan temples were found in Pergamum – Athena, the goddess of Wisdom; Dionysius (Bacchus) – the god of wine; Zeus – chief of the Greek gods; Aesculapius – the god of medicine and healing. All four of these temples were located on the large hill that stood 1,000 feet above the surrounding plain. Attached to the temple of Aesculapius was a medical school. People would come into the temple courts to be healed. Non-poisonous snakes roamed unrestrained throughout the temple. The worshippers were encouraged to lay on the floor and allow the snakes to crawl on them. They believed that there was healing power in the snakes. The symbol of the god of healing, Aesculapius, was a serpent twisted on a pole. It is still the symbol of the medical profession. As with the church at Smyrna, we are not sure how it was started, but likely it was started by Paul or some of the disciples he taught during his three years at Ephesus.

#### I. The Correspondent (V12)

As with all the letters to the seven churches, Jesus began with a description of Himself that was intended to communicate an important truth that the addressed church needed to hear. The sharp two-edged sword is of course the Word of God. **Hebrews 4:12 (HCSB)** “For the word of God is living and effective and sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating as far as to divide soul, spirit, joints, and marrow; it is a judge of the ideas and thoughts of the heart.” In that time, the sword pictured absolute authority and decisive discernment. In New Testament times, the sword was also a symbol of capital punishment. Paul is explaining the role of human government in God's plan in Romans 13:4. **Romans 13:4 (HCSB)** “For government is God's servant to you for good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, because it does not carry the sword for no reason. For government is God's servant, an avenger that brings wrath on the one who does wrong.” It is interesting that Pergamum, because of its loyalty to Rome was given the rare authority to exercise capital punishment on its own. John is saying that the city of Pergamum may wield the sword on earth, but the glorified Lord Jesus Christ wields a mightier sword from Heaven. His sword is more to be feared than that of human government and capital punishment.

This picture that Jesus gives of Himself to this congregation is not a comforting one! This church had failed to discern between truth and error. Jesus Christ pictures Himself as having the Word of God which divides between truth and error, between worldly values and God's values. The Word, like a two edged sword, divides between the wisdom and ways of the world and the wisdom and ways of God. Jesus Himself modeled for His disciples the way to deal with Satan's enticements when He faced Satan in the wilderness just before He began His earthly ministry. To every enticement, Jesus answered, “It is written...” and then He proceeded to give a passage from the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy that exposed Satan's enticements for what they really were.

Jesus was saying to this compromising church, “I have the two edged sword coming out of my mouth. Stop giving in to the enemy's enticement.” The message for our church and for each individual is that we **MUST NOT** compromise God's unchanging Word no matter how out of step we seem to be with the culture around us.

#### II. The Commendation (V13)

As with the church at Ephesus, there was much that was good about this church. Jesus begins this verse with a comforting two word reminder, “I know”. Whatever we go through, Jesus is not standing aloof as one who has no idea of what it is like to be enticed by the evil one. Remember that He faced the devil's

enticements in the wilderness in a way that goes way beyond anything we will ever face. **He knows** the struggles that you are facing. Many of the members of the church at Pergamum had remained faithful in the face of pressure to conform to the world around them. While it is not easy to follow Christ and refuse the enticements of the world anywhere, there are some places where the pressure to conform is greater than others. Jesus reminds them that He knows what they are going through living where Satan's throne is. What is "Satan's throne"? Some would say that Satan's throne is Hell. That is not true. In spite of legends, books and even cartoons, Satan is not the lord of Hell. Hell was prepared for the Devil and His demons. **Matthew 25:41 (NKJV)** "Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'" Satan will be the chief inmate in Hell because it was for him that it was prepared.

We cannot be certain exactly what Satan's throne refers to. Let me give you a few possibilities and then tell you which one I lean toward.

- It may simply refer to Pergamum being the center of pagan worship and thus a place where it seemed that Satan ruled.
- It could be a reference to the altar of Zeus on that great hill at Pergamum that looked like a throne to the traveler approaching Pergamum from Smyrna.
- It could be a reference to the city of Pergamum being a center of Emperor worship in Asia Minor.
- While any of those (and a few more I left out) could be what Jesus was referring to, I believe that Satan's throne was not something unique to Pergamum. There is a sense that all disciples live where Satan's throne is. I think it is simply a reference to the world system. Satan, as we have said numerous times is "the ruler of this world" (John 12:31). He is called "the god of this world" in 2 Corinthians 4:4. We are told in **1 John 5:19 (ESV)** "We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one." Living in this world means that we dwell in the devil's neighborhood. He is the one who sets the values and agenda of this fallen world. This world system is where Satan has set up his headquarters. There are some places on earth where Satan's presence is more outwardly obvious than other places, but in some ways he is more dangerous in areas like ours where cultural Christianity is prevalent. Cultural Christianity looks like the real thing in many ways, but it is not and I fear that millions in the Bible belt are deceived and are just as lost as the pagan bowing before a grotesque idol and uttering words of worship.

Jesus says to the church at Pergamos and the church at Powell, "I know the temptation to compromise and not look like a fanatic. I know that some of you have refused to bend or bow or give in to the pressure of the world." He commends those in the church at Pergamum who held fast to His name and did not deny His faith. In other words, they did not deviate from their surrender to the deity and lordship of Christ over every area of their lives, and they refused to compromise the truths of the Christian faith no matter how unpopular they may be in the culture in which they lived. Jesus gives an example of one of their brothers who had paid the ultimate price for not denying Jesus' name and not compromising the truths of the faith. His name was Antipas. We know nothing for certain about this man other than the fact that he died rather than deny Christ and the truths of the faith. It is speculated that he was their Pastor. The word "Antipas" means "against all". There is a tradition that is likely true that Antipas was brought before a statue of Caesar and was commanded to bow down and confess, "Caesar is lord". Antipas answered, "Jesus Christ is Lord!" The officials reportedly said, "Antipas, don't you know that the whole world is against you?" Antipas is said to have answered, "Then it is Antipas against the world!" At that point he was reportedly placed inside a brass bull and a fire was lit under it and he was roasted to death. Jesus calls Antipas "My faithful martyr (or witness – same word in Greek)". How I long for that to be said of me by the Lord Jesus.

Jesus commends those in Pergamum who were faithful to His name and to the doctrines of the faith.

### III. The Condemnation (V14-15)

There was a cancer in this church that if it was not cut out, it threatened to destroy the church. It was the cancer of compromise with the world. As we saw earlier, Satan seldom destroys a church through persecution. He often destroys churches through compromise. There was a group at Pergamum who said, "Let's go along to get along with the world and not look like bigots or backward people." This church compromised in two areas. While the specifics of compromise may differ today, all compromise in the church takes place in two areas.

#### A. Compromise in the Area of Morality and Idolatry (V14)

You can read the story of Balaam in Numbers 22-25, and 31:16. Balaam was a p-r-o-p-h-e-t for p-r-o-f-i-t. Balaam **claimed** that he could influence the gods to give favors to those he asked favor for. He had a wholesale business of selling divine favors. The king of Moab (Balak) went to Balaam to purchase favor in getting rid of the Israelites. This favor involved Balaam cursing the Israelites. Every time Balaam tried to curse the Israelites, God made him bless them. Balaam's normal way of doing business was interrupted, but he did not give up. He told King Balak that he could not curse the Israelites, but Balaam shared a plan with this enemy king that would result in the Israelites cursing themselves. Here was the plan. They would get women from Moab and Midian to seduce the Israelite men and entice them to worship their idols. The plan worked and God killed 24,000 Israelite men as a judgment for their idolatry and immorality. Let me tell you what the doctrine of Balaam looks like in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in Powell, Tennessee. It is when we buy into the world's values concerning immorality and such things as sports and hobbies. Sports can become an idol just as real as the idols of the Moabites that the Israelites worshipped. There are so many parents who are allowing and even encouraging their children to bow down the sport god as it consumes their time and keeps them from church and consumes their minds. Certainly not all participation in sports is idolatry, but it can easily turn into idolatry. Hobbies can become an idol. An idol is anything that you love more than you love God, or anything that you trust more than you trust God. An idol is anything that takes higher priority in your life than God. The immorality that has worked its way into the church of this century is the acceptance of homosexuality as a legitimate alternative lifestyle, the acceptance of couples living together without the commitment of a covenant marriage and the refusal of the church to exercise loving church discipline with the goal of repentance in such cases. This is really serious! **James 4:4 (NIV)** "You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God."

#### B. Compromise in the Area of Theology (V15)

We dealt with the Nicolaitans when we looked at the church at Ephesus. Whereas the church at Ephesus was commended for rejecting the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, the church at Pergamos was rebuked because of some in the church who embraced this doctrine. I won't go back over this doctrine except to remind you that it was closely related to the teachings of Balaam. It was likely the teaching that Christians are under grace so our behavior is not really important. Any standards in a person's life even though drawn from Scripture were likely labeled as legalism. To the modern day Nicolaitans, doctrine and behavior are unimportant. Since God is a God of love and grace, we do whatever we choose to do and it is OK because we are "under grace".

One man put it this way, "Worldliness, compromise, and tolerance had rushed into this church like a flood and she was on the verge of drowning." [Danny Aiken, excerpt from a sermon]. These two doctrines – Balaam and the Nicolaitans were the same poison – just in different bottles.

#### IV. The Command (V16)

Because compromise with the world is such a dangerous thing, there is only one way to deal with it. There must be radical repentance. Repentance involves mourning over our sin, confessing our sin (changing our mind from condoning it to agreeing with God about it), and changing our conduct by looking to God for His grace to empower obedience to God. After exhorting them to repent, Jesus reminds them of the power of God's Word to bring His discipline. The coming Jesus refers to is not His second coming; it is His coming in chastisement to His church.

## V. The Counsel (V17)

If the compromisers in this church will obey Christ's command to repent, He will bless in two ways.

### A. The Hidden Manna (V17a)

In John 6:51 Jesus tells us that the manna in the wilderness that sustained the Israelites was a type or picture of Him. Just as the manna sustained the Israelites physically, He will sustain the Christians of Pergamum with His presence and supply even when they are rejected or even persecuted by the world. This supernatural supply will be hidden from unbelievers, but those who look to Christ will be sustained by the person of Christ.

### B. The White Stone (V17b)

To be honest, we aren't sure what this symbolic white stone is referring to. There are numerous possibilities. It could be the white stone used in a jury trial that indicated a vote for acquittal. All true Christians are overcomers. At the judgment we are acquitted because Jesus has paid for our sin. He gives us the white stone of acquittal. The white stone could be the stone given to the winner of an athletic contest that was his ticket to what we would call an awards banquet. Jesus was saying that at the Judgment Seat of Christ where the rewards for believers will be given out – we have a ticket. If neither of these are correct, it is obviously something joyous similar to these.

What is the new name? That speaks of intimacy. Ray Steadman tells of having Elizabeth Elliot as a guest at his church. She is the widow of missionary martyr Jim Elliot who was killed at the age of 29 in 1956 in the jungle of Ecuador taking the gospel to an unreached people group called the Wadoni or Auca. The Book Elizabeth Elliot wrote about Jim's life, missionary service and death has been used tremendously in many lives including my and my wife Kathy's life. Ray Steadman had read the book and remembered that Jim Elliot had called his wife Betty. In conversation Steadman referred to Elizabeth as Betty. She very discreetly in kindness and in private asked the Pastor to please call her Elizabeth because "Betty" was the private name that her husband had used for her. The name Jesus referred to which no one else knows is a picture of our intimate relationship with Him that is different and better than all other relationships.

## CONCLUSION

This battle against compromise with the world on one hand and staying away from the legalistic approach of hundreds of rules and regulation in addition to the commands of Scripture is a continuing one. We must constantly be analyzing our attitudes and behavior so that we are not guilty of this deadly compromise.