

REVELATION – SERMON 10

THE CHURCH IN SATAN'S CITY

Revelation 2:12-13

INTRODUCTION

- The flow and course of this world is downwards into deeper and deeper wickedness; the easy and natural course is to go with the flow.
- But the church is not to go with the flow of this world. We are to fight and strive against it. We are not to be conformed to this world, because this world is against God, against righteousness, and against the truth.
- Christ sends His people out “as sheep in the midst of wolves” (Matthew 10:16)
- Today we are looking at a church that dwelt in one of the most evil and ungodly places in the world – it was the place of Satan’s very headquarters.
- And yet in that place, they were a witness and testimony to the truth of Jesus Christ.
- Pergamos was “by far, the most distinguished city in Asia.”
- It had a library consisting of 200,000 volumes, and was second only to that of Alexandria, Egypt.
- The altar of Zeus was 12 metres in height and was renowned as one of the wonders of the world.
- There were three temples in Pergamos dedicated to Roman emperors.
- The city housed the temple of Asclepios – the god of healing, represented by a serpent entwined around a rod.
- It was a dangerous thing to be a Christian in Pergamos – all the temptations of the paganism and immorality on one side, then the threat of execution for refusing to worship Caesar.
- There is no record in the New Testament as to when the church at Pergamos was founded, but it may have taken place during Paul’s two years at Ephesus when “all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 19:10)
- Tradition says that Gaius (3 John 1) was the first pastor at Pergamos, and was succeeded by Antipas.

- Unlike Smyrna, where there was only commendation, in this church there is both good and bad.
- Today we will study the commendable qualities of this church.

I. THE SPIRITUAL WEAPON THAT HELPED THEM

A. The “sword” was prominent in Pergamos

1. The proconsul (governor) of Asia was stationed in Pergamos, and as such, Rome had given this city the rare power of capital punishment – *ius gladii* (the right of the sword)
2. The threat of the sword constantly hung over the Christians, and was used upon them (v.13)

B. Christ bears “the sharp sword with two edges”

1. This is the sword that proceeds from His mouth and executes judgment (Revelation 1:16; 19:15,21)
2. Though the sword of kings threatened the church, they belonged to a greater King whose sceptre and sword are above all others

C. The two edges of God’s word (Hebrews 4:12)

1. The two Testaments
2. Law and Grace (John 1:17)
3. Life and death (2 Corinthians 2:16)
4. Grace and judgment

II. THE SATANIC WICKEDNESS OF THEIR HOME TOWN

A. Satan’s seat

1. The Greek word for “seat” is *thronos*
2. This is where Satan not only dwelt, but was the seat of his power
3. This designation has been linked by many to the pagan worship in Pergamos
 - a. The magnificent altar of Zeus that overlooked the city
 - b. The worship of Asclepius represented by the symbol of a serpent

- c. The numerous temples devoted to Roman Emperors
4. Satan, as a created being, does not possess the divine attribute of omnipresence
5. Contrary to popular belief, Satan's headquarters are not in hell but upon the earth (Job 1:7)
6. He was in the Garden of Eden with God, Adam and Eve (Ezekiel 28:13)
7. Satan's throne appears to have been in Babylon for centuries (Isaiah 14:4ff)
8. Subsequently his throne was in Tyre (Ezekiel 28:12-19)
9. From Tyre it moved to Pergamos, followed by Rome where Satan has ruled through the Papacy (Revelation 17:18)
10. During the Tribulation, Satan will set up his throne in the temple in Jerusalem (Matthew 24:15; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4)

B. Pergamos was a place of strong satanic influence

1. There was vehement opposition to Christianity
2. Yet even here, the Lord had His flock
3. The word for "dwellest" means to take up a permanent residence – the church was fixed and established in their stand for the gospel
4. The very gates of hell shall not prevail against the church (Matthew 16:18)

III. THE SUSTAINED WITNESS THEY HELD TO

A. Holding fast Christ's name

1. His name refers to His truth in the Gospel
2. To "hold fast" means to "seize"
3. Each year, the law required all the people to go to the emperor's temple, burn incense and say the words, "Caesar is Lord"
4. Those who complied were issued a certificate which satisfied the authorities, and enabled them to buy and sell

5. Christians confess only one Lord, Jesus Christ
 6. Holding fast is proof of genuine faith (Hebrews 3:6)
- B. Not denying the faith
1. The faith is the body of apostolic Christian doctrine recorded in the New Testament (Jude 3-4)
 2. There are many today who profess to be Christians, yet are denying elements of the faith
- C. Antipas, the faithful martyr
1. This incident was not a one-off event, but was part of a continued persecution – “those days”
 2. Other martyrs who were also martyred during this period were Agathonice, Attalus, Carpus, Polybus
 3. Antipas means “against all”
 4. We should be against everything that God is against, and He is against a lot of things!
 5. If you are *for* Christ, you must be *against* Satan and this world (James 4:4)
 6. Antipas is said to have been roasted alive inside a copper steer
 7. Note how Christ owns him as “my faithful martyr”
 8. The Greek word *martus* is most often translated as “witness” (Acts 1:8)

CONCLUSION

- 1 The course of this world is vehemently against God and the Bible
- 2 The Christian’s duty is to actively oppose this world and to “go against the flow”
- 3 In this world, Christians will always be in the minority
- 4 The spiritual weapon we use is the “sword of the Spirit”, the word of God.
- 5 Our aim must be to become skilful in the word of righteousness, to become effective in the battle (Hebrews 5:12-14)
- 6 While we see many others around us denying the faith, may we resolve to hold fast Christ’s name, even as Antipas did unto death.