

Shadows Of Christ & His Bride

Lesson #30

Pergamos, The Church of Compromise

August 14, 2024

Exalted Church from Constantine to Gregory 313 AD - 590 AD

Married the World; Church in the Center of Heresy & Apostasy

The Compromising Church: Rev. 2:12-17 And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword: ¹³ "I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. [Smyrna had a synagogue of Satan.] And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. ¹⁴ But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. ¹⁵ Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight 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 that overcomes will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knows saving he that receives it.

Title of Christ: Rev. 2:12 These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword.

Rev. 1:16 out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword.

Pergamos, as the official office of the Proconsul of Rome, was very powerful in Asia Minor. Proconsul made laws and decrees for all. He held a sword. As long as he held it upright, everything was fine. If he suddenly went down with the sword, it meant off with their head. It may look as though the Proconsul of Rome is calling the shots, but Jesus is the One who rules in the affairs of men and governments. 'Your life is in My hands. No matter the threats of the sword of Rome, I'm the one who ultimately will judge everything by My Word.' My judgment begins at the house of God.

MacArthur It is the first negative and threatening introduction of Christ because the Pergamum church faced imminent judgment. [Compromise & False Doctrines]

1. The sword is symbolic of the penetrating Word of God [Heb. 4:12-13].

More precisely, it is the discerning aspect of the Word that "judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." There is no creature hidden from His sight and

ALL things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

- The church at Pergamos was in serious danger from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself coming in judgment with His 2 edged sharp sword > the sword of judgment used to cut down those who disobey the Lord Jesus Christ and are deserving of the judgment.
- The Word of God is a double-edged sword. This speaks of its judging and moving fast from side to side and wreaking havoc as it moves.

At the end of the first century, Pergamum was a thriving city and renowned for:

A. Political Power

1. Little more than a castle on top of a hill before Alexander the Great's General Antigonus seized Pergamos for Alexander's kingdom around 334 BC. Later passed to Lysimachus.
2. Pergamos was the Roman capital of Asia Minor for 250 years after its last king, Attalus III, bequeathed it to Rome in 133 BC.
3. Rulings that affected the whole of Asia Minor emanated from here.

B. Intellectual Achievement

1. Pergamum was the chief center of cultural and intellectual life of the "Hellenistic" world.
 2. Its library rivaled the famed library of Alexandria in Egypt. 200,000 volume Library
- Consider > EVERY page of EVERY book was handwritten on papyrus and parchment.
- *Parchment, a type of writing material developed from animal skins and far stronger than papyrus [made from reeds], was invented in Pergamos

C. Wealth & Luxury

1. Its monuments and buildings were constructed of high-quality white marble in the finest Hellenistic style.
2. Every ancient Greek city worth its name boasted a theater, a focal point of public life for entertainment and civic gatherings. The architecture of the nearly intact theater of Pergamon provides what is surely one of the most spectacular—and dizzying—settings of the ancient world. Cascading sharply down the precipitous slope of the Acropolis toward the sea, the theater is one of the steepest of its kind. The 10,000 visitors would have had to carefully navigate the 80 rows of horizontal seating, lest they take a fatal tumble to the stage more than 120 vertical feet below. It is an acoustic marvel: An actor speaking normally on the stage can be heard even at the top of the *cavea* (seating structure).

D. Pagan Worship & Pagan Temples

1. Pergamos, Satan's seat, was a center of ancient sun worship, inherited from Babylon.
2. Temple To Aesculapeus - god of healing and medicine
3. The Caduceus, official emblem of the city, is a winged staff with two snakes wrapped around it. It was an ancient astrological symbol of commerce and is associated with the Greek god Hermes, the messenger for the gods, conductor of the dead and protector of merchants
4. Greeks depicted Aesculapeus holding Hermes' staff with the 2 headed snake.
 - Claimed he had the power to avert death.

E. Askelpion

1. Pilgrims from all over the Mediterranean region would flock to the city to visit the famous Askelpion, a center of medical treatments. 2nd largest in the world
2. Even the emperors came all the way from Rome to be treated here.
3. Built the world's 1st psychiatric hospital.
4. Methods of treatment included suggestion, dreams, praying, sun and water baths, exercises, honey cures, walking bare-footed, listening to music, drug therapy and giving blood, etc. The Asklepios was surrounded by woods and sheltered by mountains.

F. Center of Religion of Emperor Worship - Center of Imperial Cult of Evil

At the very time John wrote these words, Christians were suffering persecution for refusing to worship the emperor Domitian [A.D. 81-96], who insisted on being worshiped as "lord and god." Here the highest capacity in mankind, the capacity to worship, was degraded into corruption.

The city reeked with the stench of its heathenism; evil hung in its streets like a clammy fog.

Rev. 2:13 I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is.

Where You Dwell - A Mark of Permanent Residence

He Knows Their Steadfastness. They "dwelled" in Pergamos. *to settle down to stay;*
were not running away from the trouble around them.

Recall: The synagogue of Satan in Smyrna was perverted Judaism.

The throne of Satan was the Gentile base of false religions.

Bible Referred to as: Where Satan has his throne > Where Satan Rules

Where Satan lives > His Headquarters

Why does Jesus call it the dwelling place of Satan?

The word "seat" in the KJV is derived from the Greek word "Strong's #2362 thronos".

The word shows us that Satan's influence (evil) controls the city. [City of the Serpent]

It was one of the darkest, eeriest cities in the whole Roman Empire." How did it happen?

The original seat of Satan and idolatry on the earth was Babylon. It was the occultic and mythological headquarters of Satan's idolatrous and demonic stronghold.

- Nimrod, founder of the original Babylonian religion, was the son of Cush [curse] and great-grandson of Noah. He is considered the leader of those who built the Tower of Babel which led to his reputation as a king who was rebellious against God.

Background: Ham had a son named Cush who married a woman named Semiramis.

Cush and Semiramis had a son named "Nimrod." After the death of his father, Nimrod became a powerful king. He married his own mother and had a son with her, Tammuz.

It developed into the worship of his widow, Semiramis and his posthumous son,

Tammuz. Ezekiel 8:14 Then he brought

me to the door of the gate of the LORD's house which was toward the north; and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz.

Semiramis Moon goddess of ancient Babylon

Nimrod = Sun god

Tammuz Born on Dec. 25

"The entire earth is lying under the power of ancient Babylon and the spell cast by Nimrod and his mother."

Ancient people worshipped the sun. In Babylon, they made high towers [Ziggurat].

On top of Ziggurat was the temple, dedicated to the queen of heaven, whom they worshiped.

539 BC: Cyrus the Great of Persia defeated Belshazzar of Babylon. The pagan mystery cults at Babylon fled to Pergamos after the death of Belshazzar, the Babylonian emperor.

Satan's two means of approach: The violence of a roaring lion or a deceiving serpent as an "angel of light." After the 10 evil Caesar's, it seems Satan concluded that killing the Christians was not effective at defeating Christianity. Since he couldn't make them knuckle under with hostility and persecution, he changed his tactic. Satan joined the church and began to deceive it with enticement and corrupt practices and false teachings within. Jude 1:4 For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

In 312 AD, Constantine set out to defeat his rival for supreme power in the empire. His father had prospered when he prayed to the God of the Christians. So Constantine resorted to the same action. It is said on the next day, he saw a shining cross in the sky with an inscription above it: "In this sign thou shalt conquer." He defeated his rival at the Milvan Bridge, and immediately declared his conversion to Christianity.

Church of Pergamos: 313-590 AD - Exalted Church from Constantine to Gregory the Great
When Constantine accepted Christianity, he turned his kingdom into a "Christian" kingdom, ending persecution. Constantine began functioning as a self-appointed political leader of God's Church. He ordered Romans to recognize Christianity as the national religion of Rome. Constantine frequently used the word "Catholic" to describe the Church. Catholic means Universal. He wanted all men everywhere to embrace the Christian faith and to be united together. He thought Christianity could unite his empire and make it great.

Under Constantine in 313 AD > Edict of Toleration at Milan: [freedom of religion].

Results: 1. Christianity spread unmolested in the empire.

2. Christianity was adopted by Rome as the official religion of the empire.

3. The church was joined with the pagan world political system.

4. He favored Christians at court and exempted Christian ministers from taxes.

5. Issued a general exhortation to ALL his subjects to become Christians.

6. He abolished the crucifixion as a means of execution.

7. He reduced the killing of unwelcome children.

8. He advanced Christians to high offices.

9. He forbade work on Sunday.

10. He assumed the headship of the church.

11. Marriage was consummated between the world and the church.

The Church indulged some pagan doctrines to make Christianity more attractive.

Due to incentives, there was a great influx of people who professed Christianity to get into the empire, and with them they brought much of their pagan spiritual baggage.

It is interesting that many of the Catholic practices, customs and teachings had their beginning around the time of Constantine.

Heathen customs and practices crept into the church.

1. Heathen priests became Christian priests.
2. Heathen temples became Christian churches.
3. Heathen days of feasting and drunkenness were made into Christian days like Christmas and other saint days.

It caused a terrible spiritual adultery in God's Church as the clerics of Roman Christianity substituted pagan fertility festivals for God's covenant rehearsals as the proper way to celebrate the birth, death, resurrection of Jesus.

It was just the same old paganism or heathenism under a new name!

The church had not conquered the world. THE WORLD HAD CONQUERED THE CHURCH!
Paganism had put on new clothes, but it was the same old paganism

This was a period of deteriorating moral standards and doctrinal corruption. 🎵 Satan had failed to destroy the Church through persecution. Now > destroy her through compromise. Christian standards were lowered, and a union was formed between Christianity and paganism. The church gained supremacy in the empire. > State Religion > Result

- Forced conversions filled the churches with unregenerate people.

Thousands of unsaved pagans became baptized and started calling themselves Christians. In the year 324 AD, 12,000 men with women and children in proportion, were baptized in Rome. The emperor had promised to each convert a white garment and twenty pieces of gold. It did not cost anything to be a Christian. It was an advantage to be one!

- Ambition to rule, heathenism and pomp emerge in the world church.
- In exchange for religious tolerance and acceptance, the true principles of Christianity were sacrificed to accommodate pagan beliefs.

Note: Christianity got lost in all of this. It was merely a mass state religion.

Where Satan's throne is - - where Satan dwells

The religious climate at Pergamos was not conducive to the Christian life. Pergamos symbolized secular power and civil religion working together to accomplish Satan's plan. This church operated in the middle of a city chosen by Satan as his headquarters on earth. His power, being manifested and unleashed from this city, caused many in the church:

- To fall victim to Satan
- Become thoroughly engulfed in deception and even married to the world.

Remember: This church was without any apostolic ministry.

They had to meet the enemy on his own ground and it was not easy.

Consider: This kind of compromise, NOT PERSECUTION, is the fastest and most effective way to destroy the church's life and testimony.

Many denominations and believers have sold out to Satan. They have wed the world and long since been judged by Christ and stripped of any spiritual power or influence.

Warning: Heresy and error will rise up in the church when Christians stray from the pure teachings found in God's Word.

Jesus comes to call them back to the right path; He is ready for judgment.

Christian compromise is making shameful concessions to God's Word and Will.

It is departing from the Truth. A compromiser is one who leaves the doctrines and principles of God's Word to reconcile a competing philosophy or way of life.

Compromise begins with leaving your first love for Jesus Christ, which leads to compromise, which leads ultimately to immorality, idolatry, and other sins.

Compromise is deadly, because it undermines the faith of the one who is compromising.

The first consequence is a withering of our spiritual life—we become more tolerant of things that should be offensive.

The Danger of Drifting: "It is subtle and it is dangerous. Spiritual drifting takes place through a series of small compromises. Usually, compromises seem innocent at first. We barely notice they are making an impact on our spiritual life. But over time, the small compromises add up and we find ourselves in trouble." [Jeff Syverson]

The Danger of Drifting Heb. 2:1-3 Neglecting So Great Salvation

Therefore [because of these things] we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, [the message from the Son] lest we drift away [let them slip].

"Therefore" points the reader back to the facts in Hebrews 1 concerning the coming millennial glory of Christ and the believer's impending inheritance and glory in Christ's millennial kingdom.

He powerfully exhorts them, without saying so directly, to re-evaluate the worth of what they have [inheritance], and what lies ahead. Keep Focused!

The Church began drifting from the foundational truths and doctrines into compromise.

- Pre-millennial belief and 1000-year reign of Christ was thrown out of the church. Amillennialism and Augustine beliefs dominated the church.

There will never be a future literal reign of Jesus.

The 7 quotations in Heb. 1: 5-14 from the OT with regard to Jesus Christ and His coming glory in the Millennial Kingdom.

Jesus is the One who fulfills the OT prophecies. Jesus Christ Is Your Messiah, Your King!

The importance Scripture places upon the coming millennial kingdom of Christ is immense.

Paul comments on the importance of Christ's millennial kingdom in I Cor. 15:20-28.

Christ "must reign" to defeat all enemies. Death is last enemy.

The final part of Christ's redemptive work will occur during His coming millennial kingdom.

Prophecy points to this coming kingdom of the Messiah which is paramount in Scripture.

For it is in this Kingdom that the Father's eternal purpose in His incarnate Son shall be certainly and completely fulfilled.

Drift: Strong's 3901 = pararrhyéō = drift away from

- only time it occurs in Bible; it refers to going spiritually adrift, sinning by slipping away from God's anchor; gradually drift away means to "lapse" into spiritual defeat, describing how we slowly move away from our moorings in Christ.

In Heb. 6:19 Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, an anchor to show how confident we can be in the promises of God.

Wiersbe: "More spiritual problems are caused by neglect than perhaps by any other failure on our part. We neglect God's Word, prayer, worship with God's people and other opportunities for spiritual growth. As a result, we start to drift. The anchor does not move; we do.

It is easy to drift with the current, but it is difficult to return against the stream.

Heb. 2:2 For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we NEGLECT so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him,

Neglect: Strong's 272 Ameleo = to become apathetic, to have an attitude of indifference to have no care or concern for it.

Jesus comes to call them back to the right path. Ready for judgment

Apostolic Church ~34 AD - 100 AD Ephesus

Rev. 2:2-3 I know your works, your labor, your patience [steadfast endurance], and that you cannot bear [tolerate] those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not and have found them liars; [they are false] ³ and you have persevered [persisted steadfastly] and have patience and have labored [endured] for My name's sake and have not become weary.

- Serving Very BUSY doing the works of the Lord > Much activity
- Sacrificing Labor = Toil to the point of exhaustion
- Steadfast Patient = Endurance under trial > kept going when the going was tough
- Suffering Patiently bore burdens; toiled without fainting > ALL for His name's sake

Rev. 2:4-5 Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.

Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

Rev. 2:7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

To him who OVERCOMES [conquers] I will give or grant to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God."

God's purpose for born again believers NOW is to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit + Word of God. God's purpose is for believers to be joint-heirs with Jesus Christ, to rule and reign with Him in His coming Millennial Kingdom.

God's Plan: Man is created in His image to have fellowship with God in Eden and to rule and dominion. The Tree of Life is present.

Result of Fall: Man sinned and was no longer in a position to rule and have dominion. He has been cast out of God's paradise and does not enjoy the fellowship he had with God before the fall. Man lost his exalted position. Man lost his sinless nature.

The Tree Of Life shows up again when Jesus Christ sets up His Millennial Kingdom.

The earth is refreshed like the Garden of Eden and He is physically with us.

His likeness that we lost; ability to rule & have dominion that we lost; being in the Paradise of God that we lost; His physical presence among us that we lost; the fellowship we lost >

Tree of Life shows up as those who overcome are in His image and in a position to rule and co-reign as joint heirs with Christ.

"Eating of the tree of life is a reward that shall be given to the one who overcomes in addition to his salvation. His works, built upon the foundation that is Christ Jesus, abides the test of the Lord's appearing, and he receives over and above his entrance into eternal life."

If I do not repent and do the first works, I will not progress in my spiritual growth.

Therefore, the remaining promises to those who overcome will not be for me.

I will NOT lose my justification, but I will arrive at the Judgment Seat of Christ as the person in I Cor. 3:15: He himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

Because I failed to repent of departing from my first love and walked through life devoid of hearing my Shepherd's voice, I did not produce any spiritual maturity worthy of reward.

I will have an entrance into His Kingdom, but I will forfeit so much.

Persecuted Church 102 AD - 312 AD Smyrna

Rev. 2:10-11 Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days:

be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

He that overcomes shall not be hurt of the second death.

Consider: If I do not repent and do my first works, I will not be able to remain steadfast during trials and tribulations, even to the point of death.

Result: I can easily be swept into compromising God's truths.

The promises to those who overcome will be out of my reach.