

# The Compromising Church

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*Revelation 2:12-17*

## INTRODUCTION

- A. Illustration about the bear & the hunter negotiating, *Illustrations for Biblical Preaching*, p. 76.
  - 1. Compromise is so dangerous in the church.
    - a. God has revealed what he wants, & who are we to compromise with Scripture?
    - b. If we compromise with error, error will slowly (and perhaps quickly) creep into the church & the congregation will be overtaken with error.
  - 2. The church at Pergammos stands as a testimony to what occurs when churches compromise with error.
- B. Jesus reveals himself as the One with the sharp two-edged sword, v 12.
  - 1. The sword was recognized as a symbol of authority & judgment in Rome.
  - 2. The "sword" throughout Revelation is used as a symbol of war, of killing.
    - a. The fourth horsemen was given power "over a fourth of the earth, to kill with the sword" (6:8).
    - b. Rv 19:15.
  - 3. Jesus' revealing himself as the One with the sword shows that he has authority & that he comes in judgment. he is sitting in judgment on the church in Pergammos.
    - a. His judgment with the sword is seen clearly in v 16.
    - b. Let's examine what Jesus says in judgment to this congregation.

## THEY HELD FAST THE NAME OF CHRIST, v 13

- A. These brethren dwelt where Satan had his throne.
  - 1. The KJV says "seat" instead of "throne," but that's not a good translation--"throne" is the term used here.
  - 2. Throne is a symbol of authority; throne is where a king sits.
    - a. Notice the uses of the term "throne" in Scripture (Lk 1:32; Acts 2:30).
    - b. The point is that Satan has authority. He has authority over those who follow him.
    - c. Jesus referred to him as the "ruler of this world" (Jn 12:31; 14:30).
  - 3. Satan had his throne in Pergammos.
    - a. This city had a plethora of pagan shrines & was the center of emperor worship.
    - b. Many of those in Pergammos followed the emperor cult & the pagan deities, for Jesus could say that this city was given over to Satan.
- B. Even though these Christians were surrounded by paganism, they held fast to the name of Christ.
  - 1. How fast they held to the name of Christ is obvious by their doing so in the days of Antipas, Jesus' faithful martyr.
    - a. Many have supposed that Antipas was the only Christian who had been killed in Pergammos or perhaps in the province of Asia Minor.
      - 1) That seems very unlikely, for Revelation depicts much bloodshed for the faith. Nero, who died shortly before Revelation was written, was notorious for his murder of Christians.
      - 2) Antipas must have been singled out, because he was a pillar in this congregation; he may have been an elder or the preacher. That's the most plausible explanation, in my mind, as to why he was the only martyr mentioned.
    - b. Even in the face of death these Christians held fast to the faith.
      - 1) They were not going to turn to paganism or to emperor worship to escape death; they were

going to serve Jesus even if it killed them.

- 2) What about us? What if it came to the point where we had to lay down our lives to serve Jesus?
2. Too many are not willing to take a stand for Jesus when it is unpopular.
  - a. In the parable of the sower, the seed sown in stony places grows but "endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles" (Mt 13:21).
  - b. Are we, like the Christians in Pergammos, willing to take a stand, even in the face of adversity?
    - 1) Are we willing to stand against denominationalism, although such isn't popular?
    - 2) Are we willing to stand against immorality--e.g., abortion, homosexuality, although such isn't popular?
    - 3) Are we willing to stand against women taking a lead in worship, although such isn't popular?

## **THEY HELD FAST TO FALSE DOCTRINE, vv 14-16**

- A. This congregation had some who held the doctrine of Balaam, v 14.
  1. According to Num 31:16, the Moabite women at the suggestion of Balaam enticed the children of Israel to worship Baal & commit fornication at Peor (Num 25). 24,000 died by the plague the Lord sent (Num 25:9).
  2. Some in Pergammos were teaching the same thing as Balaam--they were teaching one could commit sexual immorality & eat food sacrificed to idols. This doctrine more than likely derived from the idolatry prevalent in Pergammos.
- B. Some also held the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, v 15. The doctrine of the Nicolaitans is not expressly spelled out, but it does seem as though this doctrine was close to the doctrine of Balaam.
- C. The church needed to repent or else Jesus would come and fight against the false teachers with the sword of his mouth, v 16.
  1. Notice that although the church at large did not hold these doctrines the church at large needed to repent.
    - a. The congregation needed to repent because they were allowing false doctrine in the congregation.
      - 1) They may have not wanted to hurt anyone's feelings, so they allowed these false teachers to remain in the congregation.
      - 2) Jesus says that we cannot do that. We can't be afraid of hurting the feelings of false teachers. We need to deal with them.
    - b. Scripture teaches us to keep false teachers away from our number.
      - 1) 2 Jn 10-11.
      - 2) The mouths of false teachers "must be stopped" (Tit 1:11).
      - 3) Rm 16:17.
  2. If this congregation did not repent, Jesus would come against the false teachers & fight against them.
    - a. If the church did not take care of false teachers, Jesus would take care of them.
    - b. Either way, these false teachers will be dealt with.
  3. Jesus would fight against these false teachers with the sword of his mouth.
    - a. Since the sword comes from his mouth, the Word of God is likely meant, for it came from the mouth of Christ.
    - b. That is the way to defeat error--with the Word of God.

## **CONCLUSION**

- A. To those who overcome, Jesus will give:

1. Hidden manna to eat.
    - a. The manna was hidden in that it was hidden in the ark of the covenant.
    - b. A Jewish tradition said that Josiah hid the ark of the covenant when the Babylonians overtook Jerusalem, & that the messiah would restore the ark to the Hebrews.
    - c. Manna provided nourishment for the Hebrews in the wilderness, & Jesus will provide nourishment to the one who overcomes.
  2. A white stones, and a new name which no one else knows written on the stone.
    - a. This is more than likely an allusion to the white stones given to the victors in public games.
      - 1) Those who competed & won in the public games were given a white stones with their names inscribed on it.
      - 2) That white stone entitled the bearer to be provided for at the public expense for his entire life.
    - b. Jesus will, likewise, provide for us in heaven.
- B. Do you have these blessings? Are you overcoming?