

**Revelation**  
**2:12-29**  
**“Compromised and corrupted churches”**

**I. Intro**

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**III. Vs. 18-29 A corrupted sacrifice**

**I. Intro**

Pergamos was located 20 miles from the Mediterranean Sea and was known as the greatest city in Asia Minor. Its importance was not commercial but religious as it was the first city to have a temple dedicated to Caesar. The name “Pergamos” in Greek is a compound word that means “mixed marriage” and it fits as this church represents the time frame in church history from 300 A.D. to 600 A.D. World history of this time frame is after the death of Diocletian when two men contended for emperor of Rome, Maxentius from the west and Constantine from the east. In a daring and risky military move Constantine crossed the Alps in hopes to dislodge the militarily superior Maxentius from Italy. It was a daring gamble that placed him and his army just outside of Rome where he would have to face a vastly larger army at the Milvian Bridge. He turned to help to the God of the Christians and in a dream that night saw a cross with the words “*In this sign conquer*”. His victory convinced him of the power of the Christian God and as such he professed faith in Christ.

The facts of his conversion are far more doubtful of his faith: He still conspired to murder all those that opposed him. He was only baptized the day before he died. His brand of Christianity called a halt to all state-run persecutions, made Sunday a legal holiday and by 312 A.D. the state religion made everyone in the empire a Christian apart from faith in Jesus and all religious practices were now called Christian practices. The effect of this was that Christianity was now mixed with the religions of the world including all the ancient Babylonian cults such as

the worship of the dead, priests wearing different clothing the worship of the “*mother of God*”. Yet according to Jesus’ words there still were those who refused to compromise with the world.

**In Smyrna Satan was outside the Church in Pergamos he has decided to join it. The power the Church had was superficial as it came from man through compromise with the world and as such the world embraced the church.**

## II. Vs. 12-17 A mixed marriage

Vs. 12 **Author**: To the Church that had mixed itself with the world, **Jesus reveals Himself as the One who has a sharp two-edge sword**. The sword was a sign of Roman authority and power but here it is used to describe His character. You will recall in Heb. 4:12 that the word of God is described as a “*two-edge sword*”, it is the weapon that Jesus used to defeat the devil at His temptation, but “**it cuts both ways**”! **Nothing but truth can defeat error and no peace can ever last through compromise!**

Vs. 13 **Approval**: They are **approved on three things**:

- A. **Fruitfulness in spite of circumstances**: “*I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is.*” Jesus knew the conditions in which this church had to serve in. They were living in the center of satanic influence and power yet there were those there who had still not compromised. **The Church that seeks to be “popular with the world will not be popular with Christ!”**
- B. **Fidelity in spite of opposition**: “*And you hold fast to My name*”. Though they dwelt in the center of false worship there were those that remained faithful to His name. **Biblically a person’s name represents their character and this remnant refused to compromise with Christ’s character though if they had they would have been spared persecution. A healthy Church is not judged based upon the numbers that gather**

**but rather upon their conviction in whose name they have gathered!** Jesus told us in Matt 18:20 where He said, “*For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.*”

- C. **Faithfulness in spite of persecution:** “*Did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.*” **The remnant did not compromise in the area of doctrinal teaching even when it costs them their lives.** Words and their meanings in the area of our trust in Christ are a matter of life and death. **Their trust of Jesus’ words went far beyond mere intellectual assent to total surrender to the point of death.** We know nothing of Antipas other than what his name means “*against all*” and that he lived in such a way to the point of death.

Vs. 14-15 **Accusation:** There are two accusations but they both stem from a greater issue found in the words “*you have there those*” and “*you also have those*”. ***They were not all guilty of these two problems’, but they were guilty of tolerating the two problems. There were those who had compromised the truth, but the rest had compromised by allowing them to remain in their midst.*** Jesus mentions **two false teachings** that some held on to:

- A. Vs. 14 “*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.*”

Balaam’s failure is mentioned three different ways in scripture:

1. 2 Peter 2:15 “**The way of Balaam**”: Which is **the selling of God’s gift for money.** He was a prophet spelled “***profit***”, as he had the word of God in his mouth but not in his heart, seen in the fact that he was willing to compromise for a price.

2. Jude 11 “**Error of Balaam**”: This was **Balaam’s assumption that God would curse His own Children the nation of Israel.**
  3. Rev. 2:14 “**The doctrine of Balaam**”: Jesus gives us the definition of what the doctrine of Balaam was: **It is the teaching of God’s children to worship other gods and to commit sexual immorality. It is the seducing of the people of God to practice a false way of worship thus causing them to commit spiritual adultery. The way they accomplished this was based upon holding those that held this teaching in such high regards that they were above the word of God.**
- B. Vs. 15 “*the doctrine of the Nicolaitans*”: As we saw with the church at Ephesus the Nicolaitans were a group that stressed the separation between God and the common believer by placing priests as the go between. The outcome was the blurring of moral and theological truths that made Jesus a created being. In 325 A.D. the heads of different churches met at Nicaea to establish what is now called the Nicene Creed which establish the trinity of the God head.

Vs. 16-17 **Admonition**: All are to repent or else Jesus will come and fight against those who continue to compromise. **They ought to be more concerned with the sword of the spirit then the sword of Rome!** There is **no other option given this church** either repent or be judged. He will gather the wheat and burn the tares! Those who have an ear to hear “*the over comers*” are the ones ***who believe that Jesus is the Son of God.***

Jesus promises to give them hidden manna, which was the food, used to sustain Israel in the wilderness. Jesus in John 6:30-35 spoke of Himself being that “*hidden manna*” from heaven that gives life to the world. In other words, **the promise is that of more of Himself to those who**

**turn only to Him!** The white stone was used by the judge to acquit the accused of a crime and here we see that **if they repent they will be not only acquitted but rather transformed!**

### III. Vs. 18-29 A corrupted sacrifice

**The fourth letter is the longest of them but to the smallest of cities.** Thyatira was 30 miles south of Pergamos and 30 miles northwest of Sardis. **It was a Roman military town full of trade guilds and its pride was the temple to Zeus the Greek sun god.** In Acts 16:14 Paul says that it was the town where Lydia who was a seller of purple dye was originally from. The name Thyatira literally means “***continual sacrifice***” and the name fits well the historical time frame of the church of this era which is from 606 to 1500 A.D. also known as **the dark ages**. This was **the time of the crusades, inquisitions the selling of indulgences the embracing of pagan rituals above the teachings of Christ. For example, in 1229 the reading of the Bible outside of the priesthood was outlawed, in 1545 tradition was made equal in authority to the Bible and by 1870 the pope was declared infallible.** Among the **many false teachings** started during this time was **the practice of the continual sacrifice of Jesus for our sins, (called the mass), instead of the once for all sacrifice for our sins,** (Rom. 6:10, Heb 7:27, 10:10). They started the false teaching that at communion Jesus literally becomes the bread or host and it is only in our partaking of this continual sacrifice of Him that we appropriate His grace for the remission of our sins. According to this teaching we are saved by works and not grace which contradicts the clear teaching of Eph. 2:8-9, Heb. 9:24-28. It was all of these aberrant teachings that lead a German monk who had regularly starved himself to satisfy the teaching of penance and contrition to read the book of Romans and to his amazement discover Paul’s clear teaching that we are justified by faith (Rom. 1:17). Martin Luther then wrote his letter **outlining 95 false teachings of the Roman Catholic church.** It is to this church that Jesus writes His letter of judgement, and we too ought

to hear what the Spirit has to say towards any area where we may have taken up a false system of worship.

Vs. 18 **Author**: This is the only time in revelation where Jesus emphasizes His deity, and it is no wonder as *it was this time frame in Church history where they made the worship His mother of greater importance than the worship of Him. To this church Jesus says His eyes are like a flame of fire and his feet like fine brass as He is the only One that sees all things and he has the final say on all matters not His mother.*

Vs. 19 **Approval**: In this the longest of all the letters this one verse stands as Jesus' only approval of the church. *Unlike the Church at Ephesus where purity remained while love dwindled this church kept on serving, loving trusting patiently. The problem was not their devotion but rather what their devotion was towards! They were more faithful, loving and serving a system of devotion than the person of Christ! We need to be careful as we can be more faithful to a system of works to be righteous instead of a savior who loves us!*

Vs. 20-23 **Accusation**: Again, *their problem was not that they taught but rather that they "allowed" false teaching and then followed it above the word of God. Throughout Church history most of the Churches problems can be traced to the fact that we have been prone to follow a leader instead of our savior and we end up obeying their system instead of His word.*

The mention of Jezebel is obviously figuratively as she lived from 900 B.C. to 850 B.C. . Apparently this women's seduction of God's people mirrored that of Jezebel who was the wife of Ahab. Through her leading she did away with the true priests of God and established the worship of Baal and Asherah the fertility god. She was nearly successful in totally eliminating the true worship of God as she killed all the priests and even tried to kill Elijah. The seduction of

the servants of God was nearly complete so thought Elijah until God open his eyes to the fact that there were still 7000 that had not yet bowed their knees to Baal.

Vs. 21-23 These stark words of our Lord are separated from what He calls in verse 24 “*the rest in Thyatira*”. Here He says, “*I gave you time to repent*” then in verse 22 he allowed her immorality to have its natural consequences which caused her to become ill, then finally to save the future churches Jesus says that He will wipe out her spiritual offspring! It is He who searches the minds and the hearts and if they want to be rewarded by their works He will grant them their wish! Their destruction would become an example for those that would follow not to take the same course of spiritual harlotry, says the Lord!

Vs. 24-29 **Admonition**: There were not many who had not followed this false system of worship where tradition is above God’s word but there was a group who did not have this doctrine and to them He says, “*I will put on you no other burden*”. Only that they were to “*hold fast what you have till I come*”, just **keep on making Jesus the main thing**.

Finally, they are given a twofold promise:

- a. Vs. 26 “**Power over the nations**”: Which then is described for us as ruling with the Son and the Father. In other words, if they stay to the end they will find out that they were on the winning side all along even though it didn’t seem like it at times.
- b. Vs. 28 “**The morning star**”: In the 22<sup>nd</sup> chapter of this book Jesus is called the bright morning star, so He promises to give these faithful believers more of Himself.