

Finishing Well

Lesson #33

Spiritual Warfare in Compromising Church

Aug. 23, 2023

Apostolic Church	~34 AD - 100 AD	Ephesus
Persecuted Church	102 AD - 312 AD	Smyrna
Compromising Church	313 AD - 590 AD	Pergamos
Exalted Church from Constantine to Gregory:		
Great Comprising Church; 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. 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."

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.

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.

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.

"He saw with his own eyes the trophy of a cross of light in the heavens, above the sun, bearing the inscription, Conquer By This. At this sight he himself was struck with amazement, and his whole army also." [from *Vita Constantini* by Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea; 337 AD]

Pergamos is referred to as: Where Satan has his throne > Where Satan Rules

Where Satan lives > His Headquarters

Background: Symbolizes the church during 313-590 AD [Constantine to rise of papacy]

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].

- Constantine gave Christians and unspecified others indulgence to worship as they pleased. The edict mandated the return of property that had been confiscated.

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 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.

Legend from Babylon: Tammuz, associated with the sun god, was born to Nimrod and Semiramis. He "dies" at the winter solstice. He is "resurrected" as the days get longer. This is celebrated by burning a "yule" log at night. It is replaced by a trimmed tree the next morning. These pagan symbols are associated with Christmas.

The pagan images and statues were still honored, but they were given "Christian" names such as Peter or Mary.

Artemis [Diana] worship was changed to Mary worship.

- They called her "the Great Virgin" and "Mother of the God".

Pagan practices introduced to the Church during this period include:

- Prayers Directed to Mary; Worship of Mary with Child
- Prayers for the Dead; Doctrine of Purgatory; Adoration of Saints & Angels
- Clothing of priest similar to pagan priest; Celibacy of the clergy
- The Rosary; The Mass; Worship in Latin

All children were required to be christened.

- They were supposedly made Christians by putting a little water on their heads.

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!

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 unregenerates.
- Ambition to rule, heathenism and pomp emerged 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 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.

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].

Drift: Strong's 3901 = pararrhyeō = 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.

"Therefore" points the reader back to the facts in chapter one 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!

City of Pergamos: City of the Serpent 48 miles north of Smyrna

Little more than a castle on top of a hill before Alexander the Great's General Antigonus seized Pergamos for Alexander's kingdom around 1200 BC. Later passed to Lysimachus.

- Pergamos was the Roman capital of Asia Minor for 250 years after its last king, Attalus III, bequeathed it to Rome in 133 BC.

Pergamos was Renowned for:

A. 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.

B. Wealth & Luxury

Its monuments and buildings were constructed of high-quality white marble in the finest Hellenistic style.

Acropolis rose triumphantly over the ruins of the city.

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].

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

1. Pergamum distinguished itself by becoming the site of the first cult of a living Roman emperor. 1st city in ancient Roman Empire to build a temple to Caesar in 27 BC.

2. Three temples were devoted to worship the emperor who was viewed as a god.
3. A temple was built and dedicated to the joint worship of the goddess Roma and the emperor Augustus.

Satan orchestrated the worship of Caesar from Pergamos to flow out to the Roman world.

The best-preserved ancient sacred structure on ancient Pergamon's acropolis is the Temple of Trajan, emperor who released John, built during the reign of Emperor Hadrian [117-138 A.D.] and dedicated to his deified predecessor.

Towering imposingly over the surrounding structures and ruins, its commanding presence is a testament to the strength of the imperial cult.

All the Satanic policies and rulings that affected all of Asia minor emanated from here.

One of the most dramatic structures of the acropolis was what scholars believe to be the Temple of Zeus, supreme ruler of the gods. The altar to Zeus was one of the most significant places of worship in Anatolia [Turkey]. Zeus, said to have been born in Pergamos, represents the strongest and most powerful of deities; he was to be feared and served.

He could control and manipulate other gods. The emperors and all other deities were subject to his power as well. Thus, Zeus has always been a significant deity worshiped by political leaders who need power and control to remain in their positions.

Only the massive foundations remain on the southern slope of the site. - 125'x115'x 50' tall -

- His altar stood on a hill 1,000 feet high, which rose behind the town. Eight hundred feet up, a ledge jutted out from the mountain, and on it stood the altar of Zeus.
- All day long this altar smoked with the smoke of endless sacrifices.

It dominated the city, like a pillar of cloud by day and a column of fire by night.

Pagan Worship & Pagan Temples

Pergamos, Satan's throne, was a center of ancient sun worship, inherited from Babylon.

They also worshipped the gods Apollo, Athena, Aphrodite, Bacchus the god of wine, and of Dionysus whose worship involved obscenities impossible to describe.

Pergamos was renowned as a center of medicine and for its medical school.

The Caduceus, the 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.

Pergamos, known as a center of ancient medicine, had a famous school.

- Galen, the 2nd great shining medical mind at this time, came from Pergamos.

Problem: Mingled into medicine, was a great deal of superstition.

Bizarre and strange worship of Aesculapius - god of healing associated with Pergamos; called the "serpent god."

Claimed he had the power to avert death.

Aesculapius had been born as a result of Apollo having sex with a woman.

➤ The child was raised by a centaur who taught him the art of supernatural healing.
The emblem or idol of Aesculapius was a snake. Also> medical symbol > Caduceus

Asklepion: Healing temples located in ancient Greece and in the Roman world dedicated to Aesculapius, the first doctor-demigod in Greek mythology.

The one located in Pergamos was the 2nd largest medical center in the known world.

Aesculapius was said to have been such a skilled doctor that he could even raise people from the dead. So stemming from the myth of his great healing powers, pilgrims would flock to the Asklepion built in his honor in order to seek spiritual and physical healing.

➤ Even the emperors came all the way from Rome to be treated here.

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 Asklepion was surrounded by woods and sheltered by mountains.

If you were a terminal patient, you were not allowed to go into the Asklepion.

The Asklepion priests didn't want anyone hearing that someone had died in the Asklepion.

There was a huge sign above the official entrance that said, 'Death is not permitted here.'

So the only way you could gain entrance is if they knew you were going to live.

Patients entered through a long underground tunnel with running water which had a soothing effect. Priest would stand behind the walls where there were little niches and whisper, "you are healed, you're getting better." Use of subliminal messages

Then they drank a sedative and spent the night in the dormitories of the Asklepion, while non-poisonous snakes crawled around them all night. They were told that the serpent-god Aesculapius would speak to them in their dreams and give them a diagnosis.

➤ As snakes shed their skins and are "reborn," so patients at the Asklepion were to shed their illnesses and regain health.

➤ While you slept the defused multiplicity of the deity of Aesculapius [snakes] crawled over your body and infused you with his healing power.

➤ Its touch was regarded as the touch of the god himself.

➤ But to the Christian, a god whose incarnation took the form of a snake could only be that "old serpent the devil and Satan."

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.

Title of Christ

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

Pergamos had been named three times the Temple Warder of the Imperial Cult. The

Pergamum Council had been given the "right of the sword," the right to sentence to death.

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

Rev. 19:15-16 And out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations: and He shall rule them with a rod of iron: and He treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

1. This church had been doctrinally pure, but they had drifted into compromise.

Rev. 2:13b thou holdest fast My name, and hast not denied My faith...

Rev. 2:14 & 15 because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam,

So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitains, which thing I hate. Jesus comes to call them back to the right path; He is ready for judgment.

2. This would have great meaning to these church members.

- They lived in a city filled with the splendor and power of false religion.
- Pergamos obviously was a church made up of Gentiles primarily who had been converted out of paganism.
- They had, no doubt, been converted to Christ, but due to the changing times, they have picked up some of their former pagan habits.
- They have compromised and "married the world."
- Disaster is looming on the horizon, and they are in danger of the judgment of the Lord.

Note: The first negative and threatening introduction

1. 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.

2. 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.

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

Note: Pergamos, 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.

The sword is symbolic of the penetrating Word of God [Hebrews 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.