

Checkin' Out My Walk
#5 Church of Pergamos > 313 - 590 AD - Part I

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.

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.

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.

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

- a. Forced conversions filled the churches with unregenerates.
- b. Ambition to rule, heathenism and pomp emerge in the world church.
- c. In exchange for religious tolerance and acceptance, the true principles of Christianity were sacrificed to accommodate pagan beliefs.

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.

1. Pagan festivals became Christian holidays.

The Feasts of Saturnalia > Christmas

Legend from Babylon: Tammuz was born to Nimrod and Semiramis. He is associated with the sun god. He "dies" at the winter solstice. He is "resurrected" now 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.

Feasts of Ishtar, Babylonian goddess of fertility > Easter

Fertility symbols like rabbits and eggs are connected with Easter.

The theological problems of the Trinity and of the Person of Christ were dealt with, and the following Ecumenical Councils were held to determine the church's doctrine:

Council of Nicaea - A.D. 325 - Formulated the Nicene Creed

First Council of Constantinople - A.D. 381

Council of Ephesus - A.D. 431

Council of Chalcedon - A.D. 451

Second Council of Constantinople A.D. 553

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

¹ Worship of Mary

³ Worship of Saints

² Prayers for the Dead

⁴ Worship of Angels

⁵ Pre-millennial belief and 1000 year reign of Christ was thrown out of the church.

⁶ A millennialism and Augustine beliefs dominated the church. (There will never be a future literal reign of Jesus.)

Monasticism developed and the heresies of Arianism, Apollinarianism, Nestorianism, Monophysitism, Manichaeism, and Pelagianism were combated.

The important theologians of this period were Athanasius, The Cappadocian Fathers, and Augustine.

360 AD: Julian, "the apostate," became emperor and sought to restore paganism.

Born in 332 AD, Julian, the nephew of Constantine, was trained as a Christian yet he vehemently opposed Christianity.

363-364 AD: Jovian replaced Julian and re-established the Christian religion.

379-395 AD: Theodosius made Christianity the "state religion." Theodosius was the last emperor to rule over both the eastern and the western halves of the Roman Empire.

Note: 480 AD western leg of Roman empire ceased.

Eastern leg continued another 1000 years until about 1453 when conquered by the Turks.

Church of Pergamos: 313-590 AD - Exalted Church from Constantine to Gregory the Great
Comprising Church; Married the World; Church in the Center of Heresy and Apostasy

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

Modern city of Bergama > 42,000 population

Pergamos was 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 1200 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.
4. It eventually came under Byzantine and then Ottoman rule.

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 building 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. Acropolis rises triumphantly over the ruins of the city.

1. One of the most dramatic structures of the acropolis was what scholars believe to be the Temple of Zeus, supreme ruler of the gods. Only the massive foundations remain on the southern slope of the site. - 125'x115'x 50' tall - The altar to Zeus was one of the most significant places of worship in Anatolia (or 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.

E. 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.

Note: 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.

F. 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
 - a. Claimed he had the power to avert death.
 - b. 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
 - c. Greeks depicted Aesculapeus holding Hermes' staff with the 2 headed snake.

G. 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 Asklepion was surrounded by woods and sheltered by mountains.

H. Bible 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. Christianity was now popular, and allowances were made for the pagans to become part of the church.

1. The Church indulged some pagan doctrines to make Christianity more attractive.
 2. Heathen priests became Christian priests.
 3. Heathen temples became Christian churches.
 4. All children were required to be christened. They were therefore supposedly made Christians by putting a little water on their heads.
 5. Heathen days of feasting and drunkenness were made in to Christian days like Christmas and other saint days. Christianity got lost in all of this. It was merely a mass state religion.
- Note: What persecution didn't accomplish, marriage to the world did.

I. 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

Rev. 19:15 Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations.

1. 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.
2. This church was doctrinally pure, but they had drifted into compromise. Jesus comes to call them back to the right path; He is ready for judgment.
3. This would have great meaning to these church members.
 - a. They lived in a city filled with the splendor and power of false religion.
 - b. Pergamos obviously was a church made up of Gentiles primarily who had been converted out of paganism.
 - c. They had, no doubt, been converted to Christ, but due to the changing times, they have picked up some of their former pagan habits.
 - d. They have compromised and "married the world."
 - e. 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, 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.

II. Christ's Commendation

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

Where You Dwell - A Mark of Permanent Residence

A. He Knows Their Steadfastness - They "*dwelled*" in Pergamos. "*to settle down to stay*;" They settled down in Pergamos and 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.

Note: This is a true growing church waging an uncompromising war at the throne of Satan.

They were doing well enough to be commended. "I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is and you hold fast My name and did not deny My faith."

Consider: Faith is tested so it might be proven to be genuine. A faith that cannot endure trial is really no faith at all. True faith is not fragile, it is indestructible.

It survives everything, even the onslaughts of hell.

B. Where Satan's Throne (seat) Is > In Pergamos

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

a. Translated in the NKJV and the ASV as "throne".

b. Defined as: "1a) a chair of state having a footstool

1b) assigned in the NT to kings, hence, kingly power or royalty - Thayer".

c. The word shows us that Satan's influence (evil) controls the city.

It was one of the darkest, eeriest cities in the whole Roman Empire."

1. 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. In our day, Satan is free and he actively operates as the:

"*god of this world*", 2 Cor. 4:4; and as "*the prince and power of the air*", Eph. 2:2.

Christ knows your situation > when you face persecution on your job, at school, at home, or even at church. He knows the pressures society places on the dedicated child of God.

Heb. 13:5b-6 For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

So we may boldly say: "The LORD *is* my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"

Heb. 4:15-16 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are*, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

2. His power, being manifested and unleashed from this city, caused many in the church:

(a) To fall victim to Satan

(b) Become thoroughly engulfed in deception and even married to the world.

(c). 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.

3. Satan's Tactics:

a. 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.

b. All the Satanic policies emanated from here to attack to whole Church of Asia Minor.

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

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

e. Mingled into medicine, was a great deal of superstition.

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

1) **Aesculapeus 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.

2) The emblem or idol of Aesculapeus was a snake. Also> medical symbol > Caduceus

3) "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."

4) 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

5) 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 Aesculapeus would speak to them in their dreams and give them a diagnosis.

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

7) While you slept the defused multiplicity of the deity of Aesculapeus (snakes) crawled over your body and infused you with his healing power.

8) 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."

Interesting Notes Regarding the "Original Seat of Satan and Idolatry"

- a. Original seat of Satan and idolatry on the earth was Babylon.
- b. Nimrod, founder of the original Babylonian religion, was the son of Cush 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.
- c. 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 becomes a powerful king, marries his own mother and has a son with her, Tammuz.
- d. It developed into the worship of his widow > Semiramis and his posthumous son > Tammuz.
- e. People worshipped the sun. In Babylon, they made high towers (Ziggurat). On the top of Ziggurat was the temple, dedicated to the queen of the heaven, whom they worshiped.
- f. The Pagan mystery cults at Babylon fled to Pergamos after the death of Belshazzar, the Babylonian Emperor. (Cyrus the Great of Persia conquered Babylon.) Pontifex Maximus became the high priest of the pagan system in Pergamos. The leader of Pergamos used the same ancient title and vestments as Babylonian priests.
- g. As we trace the seat of Satan, we discover how it moved from Pergamos eventually to Rome - and many of the trends we find in the Roman Catholic Church are owed to paganism.

Massive Altar to the Worship of Zeus (king of the Greek gods) on the Acropolis

- a. 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.
 - b. They also worshipped the God's Apollo, Athena, Aphrodite, Bacchus the god of wine, and of Dionysus whose worship involved obscenities impossible to describe.
 - c. Looked like a "Satanic" throne and reflected a false religion
- Question: Could this massive altar refer to Satan's throne in Rev. 2:13?
- d. Many scholars believe it refers to the great altar of Zeus which was on the hillside looming over the city. It was a great chair, or throne, 50 feet high, and one could look up there at any time and see what Jesus calls "Satan's throne."

The altar known today as the Great Altar of Pergamon, was moved to Berlin in the 19th century by German archaeologists, who evidently had an easy time getting permission for its removal from the indifferent authorities of the Ottoman empire.

Fascinating footnote of history: In the 1880's, a German archaeologist working in the city of Pergamum removed that throne, that Satanic seat, from the hillside and took it to Europe. Today it is visible in the Pergamum Museum in the city of East Berlin! Satan's throne has been in East Berlin for over 100 years. Is there any connection with the rise of Hitler, and the Nazis? East Berlin is where Hitler's headquarters were located.