

God's Promises to His People that Overcome



- Part 3: The Church at Pergamum
(Based on the Seven Churches in Revelation)

Statement of Purpose for these Essays

This is the hour of the "forerunner" spirit that is "preparing the way for "the second coming of the Lord." Just as John the Baptist, in the "spirit of Elijah," at the first coming of Jesus declared, I believe the Lord is bringing this message forth to prepare the Bride, the Body of Christ, the Church, for Jesus' soon return. Many within the Body of Christ have a "warning alarm" that seems to be within them. It is imploring them to exhort every one of us within the Body of Christ to "Consider their Ways;" to "repent for the Kingdom of Heaven (Jesus' return) is at hand;" to "turn towards and kiss towards" the Lord like never before (return to your first love); to beware of false prophets and prophesy; to beware of seductive, "new" doctrines; etc.

In these essays we are discussing the messages that Jesus had given to the "seven churches" mentioned in Chapters 1, 2 and 3 of the Book of Revelation. We are hearing in these messages of Jesus to His Body, the urgency and seriousness of not just a time when John recorded this but for the hour we are in, today, as believers. We hear Jesus' heart for His beloved Bride. Revelation 3:19 and 20 states as follows, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." This is the crux of Jesus' message to the seven churches, the seven types of "hearts" of people, the seven types of leaders or leadership within the Body of Christ. He loves us so much that He will rebuke and chasten us. Jesus desires and will have a Bride that is "spotless and without blemish." Will we hear His voice? Will we hear His heart? Will we "open the door to our hearts" to the possibility that maybe, just maybe, we need to have "ears to hear and heed what the Spirit is saying" - to each of us, personally, as well as corporately.

To all of the churches mentioned, Jesus states promises to those who "overcome." As we review each church, we will break down Jesus' messages to each of the churches into the following segments:

- A brief history or description of that particular church location
- The description of Jesus given to that particular church
- A description of what that church did well and was commended for
- A description of what that church did not do well and was chastised for
- The things that Jesus told each church to overcome
- The promise given to those who overcome

"He who is able to hear, let him listen and heed to what the Spirit is Saying"

Seven Churches in Revelation

- Ephesus – Revelation 2:1-7
- Smyrna – Revelation 2:8- 11
- **Pergamum – Revelation 2:12-17**
- Thyatira – Revelation 2:18-29
- Sardis – Revelation 3:1-6
- Philadelphia – Revelation 3:7-13
- Laodicea – Revelation 3:14-22



The Church at Pergamum – Revelation 2:12-17

- **A Little about Pergamum (also known as Pergamos)** - Pergamos is a Greek word- meaning “*height; elevation*) Located on top of a hill just above the modern day city of Bergama in modern day Turkey. Pergamum rose to prominence during the years following the death of Alexander the Great in 323 B.C. Due largely to its strategic position along land and sea trading routes and in part to the wealth of the kings who ruled the kingdom, the city enjoyed centuries of prosperity that continued when it passed peacefully to Rome’s control in 133 B.C. From that point on, Pergamum’s fate was linked to that of Rome, and it rose and fell in tandem with the great Roman Empire. At the time of the writing of Revelation, Pergamum was a center for Roman pagan worship of its gods. The people of Pergamum were known as the “Temple-keepers of Asia.” The city had three major temples. One was dedicated to the worship of the Roman emperor, another for the goddess Athena, and the other known as the “Great Altar of Zeus,” the king of the Greek gods. Many scholars believe this altar is the “Throne of Satan” mentioned in the book of Revelation. It is no coincidence that the word for “Pergamum” means “height or elevation.” Satan always wanted to be lifted “above the throne of God.”

“That word ‘throne’ was used in a personal private residence, and it was a chair for the lord of the house, the master of the house. The very fact that Jesus would use this word means that Satan felt at home there. He sat on a throne there. It was his territory. He was the master of that house.”
- From Rick Renner’s book, *A Light in the Darkness*

It was upon this “altar” that the Christian leader of the church at Pergamum, Antipas, was martyred. Jesus refers to his martyrdom in Revelation 2:13. It was said that upon this altar there was a huge iron bull with pipes coming from within that would run through the bull’s nostrils and mouth. What the pagan worshippers would do is that they would place people within the bull with their head placed inside the head of the bull. Then they would light a fire and literally roast the individual inside. As the individual would “roast” to death inside, the groaning and shouts would pass through the pipes that were in the bull’s head and it would make it sound like the bull would “come alive.” Interesting is that in the late 1930s Adolf Hitler had parts of the temple of Zeus, along with this altar of Zeus brought back to Berlin. Parts of the temple went on display in the city’s

Pergamon Museum in 1930, just in time to inspire one of the most brutal dictators the world has ever seen. The altar, the so-called "Throne of Satan," was actually placed under Hitler's podium at the stadium in Nuremberg where Hitler gave his most despicable speeches. It was at one of those speeches that Hitler first used the term "final solution" for the annihilation of the Jewish people. The holocaust put to death over 6 million Jews through the use of gas chambers and "ovens." Is this a coincidence? I don't think so.

- **Description of Jesus** - *"...These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges"*

In Revelation 1:16 Jesus refers to Himself as the One that *"...out of his mouth went a sharp two edged sword."* Obviously this is referring to the Word that proceeds out of His mouth - the Word of God. In Hebrews 4:12, it states that the Word of God is *"...quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."* John tells us in His Gospel that in the beginning was the Word (Jesus). The church of Pergamum was about to have their soul and spirit be "discerned" and "rightly divided" by the Word of God, Himself.

- **What that Church did well** - *"I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth."*

Even in the midst of all the debauchery and pagan influence in their city, the Pergamum assembly was found by Jesus to be basically faithful to their faith. They were not swayed to follow after the pagan gods. They remained faithful to their belief in who Jesus is and what He had done. We also see that in the midst of perilous times, such as persecution that led to martyrdom for some, they still remained faithful.

- **What that Church did not do well** - *"But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate."*

Here we see the admonition concerning the doctrine of Balaam and the stumbling block that it was for the children of Israel. Jesus is referring to false teachings and false doctrines that will begin and already have been starting to infiltrate the Body of Christ in Pergamum. Obviously, we can see this happening today. The problem was not that these false teachings and doctrines were being spoken by certain deceivers. The problem was that they were allowing them to remain in the Body under the misconception of having to accept those and love everyone - even if they were spreading poison in to the Body.

What would be the doctrine of Balaam?" Well, Jesus gives us a clue. They were advocating that it was alright for the believers to *"eat meat that was sacrificed to idols"* as well, as that it was okay to *"commit fornication."* This was in direct contradiction against the directive given by the leadership in Jerusalem found in Acts 15:29 - *"That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well."* If we look at the account of Balaam and Balack in Numbers 22-24, we read that the tactic of the enemy (satan) was to try to get the Israelites away from following the leading of God and His ways to follow another direction, a path of compromise, which if they followed would have led them into captivity, right into the enemy's plan for them. Numbers 31:16 tells us concerning the result of the Israelites that were led astray by this - *"Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor, and*

there was a plague among the congregation of the LORD.” Ultimately, Balaam was “slain by the sword.” - Numbers 31:8.

Taking this into account we can now “fast forward” to Pergamum and understand what Jesus was referring to. By understanding the “culture” of Pergamum, we can see that these corrupters of the people were most likely urging believers to make a practical compromise with the society within which they found themselves. They taught that converted Christians ought to remain members of the pagan clubs, and that they might do so without disloyalty to their faith. In this they were saying that the Christian would be seen as a “regular” person by others (the pagans) and that they are really no different than anyone else.

Isn't this what we allow to be taught in some of our ministries today? Isn't this what some of our ministries have become today? We want to “blend into the culture. We want to be seen as “just one of the guys.” Our worship and ministries have become so culture driven that we do not realize the compromise that we are in. Let's face it, fornication and adultery is running rampant within the Body of Christ. Not to mention pornography. Abortions and divorce have become just as common place within the Body of Christ as in the society in which we live in. Our well meaning leaders are not stepping up to declare that this is totally wrong.

The Pergamum church was allowing these lies to be brought forth without doing anything about it. They may not have agreed or accepted the teachings and doctrines of these false teachers but they did not do anything to stop them nor did they rebuke them. By not doing anything they actually gave credence and without realizing it they were affirming these false doctrines. Ultimately, these false teachings and doctrines along with the perpetrators of them were “elevating” themselves to a “height” higher than the true word of God. The forces of darkness assigned to that city called Pergamum (Gr-“height;” “elevation”) were being allowed, slowly but surely, to begin usurping the authority of the true Word of God with lies and compromise.

It is the same today. The true, pure word of God is being twisted and “spun” into saying things that it never ever was saying. We have teachings that tell us that we need to update the scriptures to fit into and be more relevant to today's culture as if the Word of God is not relevant to any and all cultures in any era or time period – yesterday, today and forever. We have leaders saying that it is okay to now do things that the scriptures clearly tell us are not. The concept of marriage and fidelity is being cast into the dirt – not just with the “gay agenda” of “same sex marriage” - but with the church not even flinching about divorce and impure lifestyles.

To the Pergamum church, Jesus again refers to His detesting of the “Nicolaitans.” The Ephesus assembly was commended by Jesus because they did not tolerate it at all within their assembly. However, the Pergamum assembly was chastised by Jesus because they allowed it to infiltrate their assembly, causing some to actually adhere to that doctrine and teaching which Jesus, himself actually tells us He “hates.” (The reader is directed to Part 1 of this series where it discusses the Nicolaitans in further detail.)

Jesus exhorts the Pergamum assembly to “repent!!!” He is telling us within the Body that may be falling and leaning towards these false teachings, knowingly or unknowingly, to “repent!!!” Notice - Jesus is telling us that if we do not repent and turn from these things, that He personally will come quickly and fight against us with the “*sword of His mouth,*” the true, pure, unadulterated Word of God. Oh my!! Do any of us really want Jesus to come and fight against us? We all know what the outcome of that would be – and it would not be pretty.

- **What to Overcome** - *"To him that overcometh..."*

We must repent and become victorious in our lives as well as within the Body of Christ over these false doctrines, these lying spirits, these lying tongues, those false teachers that would try to deceive if possible the very elect. Paul calls them *"doctrines of devils..."* - 1Timothy 4:1. We must stand up and declare, "Enough!!!" We must overcome the "easy way out" of compromise, thinking that we need to be "culture driven" in our approach in bringing the Gospel to the world. We must overcome our own personal tendencies in the compromising things we do, ourselves, making our own personal "doctrines" by justifying them within our own minds. We will only truly "overcome" through a true heart of repentance.

- **The Promise of Overcoming** - *"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 knoweth saving he that receiveth it."*

The promise that Jesus gives to the one who overcomes these traps and/or repents from those things mentioned to the Pergamum church is a two-fold promise. The first aspect of this promise is that those who overcome will be given the privilege to eat of the *"hidden manna."* What Jesus is referring to here is that those who overcome to the tendencies and temptations to follow after false doctrines, false teachings and false teachers - no matter how wonderful they may sound - and stay true to the truth of the Word of God, those who overcome will be given even greater insights and greater understanding of truths that are "hidden" to those who are not seeking after the truth but are leaning on their own understanding (man's concepts) of what they think the Word of God is saying.

The Apostle Paul encourages and warns Timothy and Titus to beware of these types of things which he refers to as "fables."

1Timothy 1:4 - *"Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do."*

1Timothy 4:7 - *"But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness."*

2Timothy 2:4 - *"And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables"*

Titus 1:14 - *"Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth."*

It is the Holy Spirit that leads us into all truth. (John 14:16; John 16:13) It is through the Holy Spirit, the "Spirit of truth" (John 15:26) in which the Word of God is opened up, revealed and illuminated to the child of God. Paul refers to this by using the term "mystery." He uses it for the purpose of showing that the concept of the *"Messiahship"* that Jesus brought forth was "hidden" within the Old Testament scriptures but is now revealed and illuminated in and through Jesus for all to see. (Romans 11:25, 16:25; 1Corinthians 2:7; Ephesians 1:9, 3:3, 4, 9)

Just as that was "hidden" within the scriptures and the Jews could not see it, so now today there are things still "hidden" within those same scriptures (including now the New Testament scriptures) that are still yet to be revealed, understood and illuminated. Jesus is saying that it **will be** illuminated to those who will not run after false teachers and their teachings but rather trust in the Holy Spirit to illuminate even "greater truths" in which God wants to reveal for this hour. I am not just talking about "prophetic utterances" that are wonderful in this hour. However, I am referring to an "opening" up and illumination of the Word of God itself in a greater way. The Word of God is never ending. The Word of God is always full of God's heart and ways that are never exhausted because God is a limitless God. We are to take Paul's counsel that he gives to Timothy and, *"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."* (1Timothy 2:15)

The second aspect of Jesus' promise to the Pergamum assembly was that they will be given *"a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it."* Concerning the "white stone" of this passage, I have not really found an adequate reference to what it may actually represent. I have found numerous "speculations" on this some of which are as follows: (1) It was a practice in the first century to send a stone or potsherd (a broken piece of pottery) to a guest who was invited to a feast with the necessary information such as the name of the host and time and date for the feast. The guest would show this invitation to the servants upon arriving at the feast to gain admittance. (2) It has also been suggested that a black stone would be used in a court trial to condemn an accused person while a white stone meant acquittal. (3) It was a Roman custom to use a white stone, which represented a ticket of entrance to an event in one of the arenas. Any one of the above reference could fit within the context of this aspect of the Promise that Jesus was invoking over those that overcome.

Concerning the "new name" written upon that stone, it is referring to the name that each one of the believers that overcome will receive. It will be "etched in stone" implying that it will be an everlasting name. In the scriptures we see God changing Abram's and Sarai's names when they entered into covenant with Him. He added the "h" and it's "heh" sound representing YHWH's name and they were given a new name - "Abra-h-am" and "Sara-h." Could it be something like that? Or, could it be our "bridal name" that we take on as the "Bride of Christ?" For example - my name is Ray Tripi. As I take the "bridegroom's" name would my name become "Ray Jesus Christ?" Whatever it may be, it is a new name that each one will know because Jesus knows each one of His sheep by name. Isaiah mentions this new name in Isaiah 62:2, *"And the nations shall see your righteousness and vindication [your rightness and justice—not your own, but His ascribed to you], and all kings shall behold your salvation and glory; and you shall be called by a new name which the mouth of the Lord shall name."*

What wonderful promises we have as we overcome the tendencies and compromises of the "easy Gospel" teachings that are permeating our churches and assemblies, today. We must overcome the corporate church mentality of thinking that we need to be "culture driven" in our approach in bringing the Gospel to the world which leads us into compromise. We must overcome our own personal tendencies in the compromising things we do, ourselves, making our own personal "doctrines" and justifying them within our own minds. The first step to "overcome" is through a true heart of repentance - not just mere remorse. Where are we concerning this? Is the warning that Jesus gives to the Pergamum Church something that some of us need to listen to, heed and repent of.

Remember, the Pergamum church was commended by Jesus for remaining faithful to their belief in who He is and what He had done. They were not swayed to follow after the pagan gods. However, their problem was that they were allowing false teachings and doctrines to continue without confronting and stopping them from infiltrating their assembly. Even though we are not going after pagan gods, are we elevating our own teachings and "revelations" and new doctrines above the precepts of God? In Isaiah 55: it states, *"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."* Do we truly believe that or are we knowingly or unknowingly trying to usurp the authority of God just as Lucifer did. He wanted to exalt himself above the Throne of God. That didn't work out too well for him.

Will we learn and repent so that we can open our spirit to the true Word of God - His written Word - that "hidden manna" found within the scriptures? Will we listen, heed and repent so that we will know our "new names" that will be etched forever on a "white stone" that quite possibly signifies our "ticket of entry" into His everlasting Kingdom? Oh what great promises He has given us!!!

*"He who is able to hear, let him listen and heed to what the Spirit is saying,"
- Both, corporately as a Body of Christ and individually as the Bride of Christ.*