



The Revelation of Jesus Christ

CLA – 2016

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Chapter Two

Day of Discovery Background Video

Question

Given a choice between living as a Christian in a godless society, or living in a very religious society, which would you choose and why?

Chapter Two

- **12 “And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this: 13 ‘I know where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. 14 But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality. 15 So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. 16 Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth. 17 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.’**

Chapter Two

- **Turkey was once part of the Pergamum empire, and in 200 BC the king of the empire struck a deal with Rome that was essentially a non-compete.**
- **The king's grandson nullified the deal with Rome upon his death and gave the empire over to Rome.**
- **Great deal for Rome, a bad deal for the people of the empire, and a great, great day for the gospel because then most of world would have one language and one governing body allowing the free and fluid movement of the gospel.**

Chapter Two

- **In the city of Pergamum, there was a temple or shrine to almost every deity known at the time.**
- **If you had any interest in worship of any kind, Pergamum would be the place for you, whatever religion you happened to have.**
- **Jesus describes Pergamum as the place where Satan dwells – not hard to imagine at all, given all of the false gods that were worshipped in the city.**

Chapter Two

- ***If you wanted power over your enemies*, you might visit the temple of *Zeus*, who was accorded a status of god of gods.**
- ***If you craved sensual pleasure of the flesh*, then you could go worship in orgy like fashion at the temple of *Dionysus* where the partying sometimes ended in death for the worshippers.**
- ***If you were a farmer and looking for a blessing on your crop for the season*, then you could go and worship at the temple of the goddess *Demeter*.**

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- ***If you were in need of physical healing*, then you could worship at the temple of *Asclepion* where the healing techniques involved snakes.**
- ***Or maybe you craved wisdom*, in that case you could go worship at the alter of the goddess *Athena*.**
- **And on those days when *you wanted to affirm your allegiance to the true Roman god*, Caesar, you could go to the temple of *Trajan*.**

Chapter Two

- **So now imagine being a Christian in Pergamum, where to believe in Jesus as your one, and all sufficient God is like blasphemy to the those around you.**
- **To declare that it is Jesus, not Zeus who is all-powerful, would be to slander the god of your neighbors.**
- **To declare that it is Jesus, not Dionysus, that has promised us ultimate and eternal pleasure would be an affront to those in your city.**

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- **And to believe that it is God who provides for us, and not the goddess Demeter, would not sit well at all with those who were entrenched in their false worship.**
- **And let's not forget that Jesus supersedes Asclepion as healer, Athena as the source of wisdom, and Trajan as the only true God.**
- **So to try to live and maneuver in a culture of the false gods of Pergamum, actually brought with it the charge of being an atheist. (a god denier)**

Chapter Two

- So we see in Pergamum, some similar circumstances that we saw for the believer in Ephesus, and in Smyrna.
- If you were not in step with the culture of false gods, then you were going to have pain, separation, economic hardship, and face the threats of death.
- Since so much of the culture seemed to be at the whim of the false gods of Pergamum, just living your life for Jesus as your one and only God, brought with it all forms of persecution.

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- **It was in fact, this city where Jesus sites the death of His faithful martyr, Antipas.**
- **Legend has it that Antipas was roasted alive in a hollow life-size bull, which had a bonfire under its belly, because Antipas refused to renounce his faith in Christ Jesus.**
- **We sometimes complain of living in a godless society – well just maybe it is even worse to live in a society with the opposite problem, too many gods.**

Chapter Two

- **To the credit of the Christians in Pergamum, Jesus commends them for their faithfulness under such conditions when He says,**
- **“I know where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.”**
- **They held fast to His name – Acts 4:12 And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.**

Chapter Two

- **Rev 2: 14 But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality.**
- **One of the ‘things’ Jesus had against the church at Pergamum was that they tolerated those who followed the teaching of Balaam.**
- **The teaching of Balaam is, at its root, a doctrine that encourages compromising the standards of righteousness in order to avoid conflict, or curry favor.**

Chapter Two

- According to gotquestions.org the doctrine of Balaam is “the attitude that one can be fully cooperative with the world and still serve God.”
- 2nd Peter 2:15 forsaking the right way, they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness.
- God does not tolerate the doctrine of Balaam (see Numbers 22) because, “a little leaven leavens the whole lump”.

Chapter Two

- **The warning to the church is clear – if you want to play around with sin, you may, but do not expect to God to play along.**
- **Jesus mentions that they also have some who follow a similar error, the teachings of the Nicolaitans.**
- **If you recall from the Ephesus lesson, the doctrine of the Nicolaitans implies that total separation between Christianity and the practice of occult paganism was not essential.**

Chapter Two

- **So it seems that, the doctrine of Balaam and the doctrine of the Nicolaitans are at least cousins – sort of nuanced versions of the same error.**
- **Both strains of this error can be deadly, if not instantly, surely in their lasting effect on the life of the indulging believer.**
- **I fear that to one degree or another we are all guilty at times of following some doctrines that are simply the same errors of the past; just dressed up a bit.**

Chapter Two

- This much is certain, the intentional worship of a false god, whether it's just to get along or not, is never acceptable with Christ.
- I am not certain that a true believer could actually pull this off – the intentional worship of a false god.
- Math 5:13 “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? *It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men.*”

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- Later on in the letter to the church at Laodicea, Jesus will plead with that church to take a stand for Him, and not be in the lukewarm middle.
- Then He says He will spew them out of His mouth – so it would seem that God takes a very clear and hard stand against those who want to have a foot in the world while on their way to Heaven.
- Does this mean we have to be perfect? No, but it does mean that trying to have it both ways, is a more serious offense than we may think.

Chapter Two

- **“The problem with the church in Pergamum was not that it was in Pergamum, the problem was that there was too much Pergamum in the church”. Joe Stowell Cornerstone University President**
- **So what are those doctrines that the church of our day either follows, or ignores, in order not make ‘waves’ in society? (spiritual political correctness)**
- **So many churches are more concerned about their income statements than they are about the salvation of their flocks.**

What doctrines are modern churches ignoring in order not to offend?

- Sin
- Repentance
- Hell
- Judgment
- The Blood Atonement
- Jesus as the only way to God

Chapter Two

- So conditions at Pergamum were difficult for the believers, but not impossible.
- In fact, many of the believers there were not wavering, but persevering through great difficulties.
- Jesus in fact promises them some of the hidden manna as a way of sustaining those who would be faithful to Him.

Chapter Two

- **The hidden manna is not clearly identified in the Bible, but we can guess what is meant.**
- **Manna was used to sustain Israel in their wilderness journey – mysteriously supplied by God for His people.**
- **A pot of manna was placed in the Ark of the Covenant, and then disappeared mysteriously – could that be the ‘hidden manna’?**

Chapter Two

- **Rev 2:17 To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.**
- **In the ancient world, when a king or some other dignitary would hold a big event, the invitations went out on pieces of white marble with the guest's name engraved on it.**
- **Well, could it be that this is Jesus' way of rewarding the faithfulness of the persevering believers at Pergamum?**

Chapter Two

- **They were excluded from all of the festivities that came along with the worship of all of the false gods at Pergamum.**
- **For the faithful Christian, those parties were constant reminders of the fact that they, because of their faith in Jesus, were always on the outside of celebrations.**
- **So when Jesus says I plan to give you a royal invitation on a white stone with a name that only you know, well I think they understood that ultimately they would be invited to the only celebration that really counts.**



Questions / Comments