

Pergamum: Be Biblical, Reject Worldliness



“¹⁴ ... You tolerate some among you whose teaching is like that of Balaam.... ¹⁵ In a similar way, you have some Nicolaitans among you who follow the same teaching.” Revelation 2:14-15 NLT

Compromise - Sometimes Yes, Sometimes No

Compromise is necessary for certain situations - such as in a marriage relationship, business decisions, or politics. However, sometimes compromise must be absolutely rejected - such as the purity of your medicine or food, the fidelity of a marriage relationship, or commitment to scripture being the standard for our beliefs, behavior, and morals.

The problem of the church in Pergamum is that they were compromising their devotion. They allowed false teaching and unbiblical behavior to be **tolerated**. Jesus wrote this message to Pergamum to correct their unacceptable compromise and to instruct them to be **totally biblical** in their behavior and beliefs. They were not to embrace the sinful lifestyles & attitudes of the world.

The Point for the Messages to the 7 Churches

The primary purpose for the messages to the 7 churches of Revelation 2-3 is explained in Ephesians 5:25-27. Jesus wants to purify and mature His bride, the universal Church, for the time she will be **united to Him**—whether walking through the door of death OR by means of the rapture (Greek ἀρπάξω—snatch away).

Central Lesson

A maturing Christian is Biblical and rejects worldliness

1. **Church:** The Church in **PERGAMUM** (2:12).
¹² “Write this letter to the angel of the church in Pergamum...”
2. **Christ:** The one with the sharp, two-edged **SWORD** (2:12).
¹² “...This is the message from the one with the sharp two-edged sword.”
 - **Two-edged sword** - a vicious weapon and symbol of Roman authority. It had the ability to cut when swung from one side to the other. **Hebrew 4:12** refers to the Bible as a two-edged sword cutting between soul & spirit. Also, a reference to the vision of Christ in Rev. 1:12-16 where a two-edged sword came from the mouth of Christ.
3. **Compliment:** Jesus knows they live in (a hostile area) where Satan’s throne is, yet they have remained **LOYAL** to Jesus & they refused to deny Him (2:13).
¹³ “I know that you live in the city where Satan has his throne, yet you have remained loyal to me. You refused to deny me even when Antipas, my faithful witness, was martyred among you there in Satan’s city.”

- **Satan has his throne** - the meaning of this expression is historically unclear. It is assumed that it is a metaphoric expression referring to a Roman authority governing over the city who was evil and ruthless.
- **Antipas** - although we do not know the specifics or who he was, we know he was a member of the Pergamum church who was martyred for refusing to compromise biblical principles and was loyal to God.
- **You have remained loyal** - just like Antipas, many, but not all, within the Pergamum church have remained loyal to Christ.

4. **Criticism:** They tolerated people who teach **UNBIBLICAL** teachings (doctrine) (2:14-15).

“¹⁴ But I have a few complaints against you. You tolerate some among you whose teaching is like that of Balaam, who showed Balak how to trip up the people of Israel. He taught them to sin by eating food offered to idols and by committing sexual sin. ¹⁵ In a similar way, you have some Nicolaitans among you who follow the same teaching.”

- **Balaam** - a prophet for profit. He served God with selfish motives.
- **Balak** - In Numbers 22-24, the king of Moab, was afraid of Israel as they were traveling through his land. He hired Balaam to use his gift of prophecy to curse Israel. But God was with Israel. Every time Balaam opened his mouth to curse Israel, God made a blessing come out. Finally, in desperation, Balaam suggested Israel make an unholy alliance with Moab. This resulted in intermarriage between the two nations and the pagan cults and customs slipped into Israel. This resulted in idolatry, sexual immorality, and other depraved practices. Israel was to be holy unto God but they compromised and became like the world. Jesus criticized Pergamum because some of them compromised with the world. The Bible teaches we must not be like the sinful world (2 Cor. 6:16-18). **As God’s people, we are to be “in” the world but not “of” the world.**
- **Nicolaitans** - This was mentioned in the message to the church at Ephesus (2:6). Scholars are unsure about the identity and practices of the Nicolaitans. It assumed that they blended pagan practices with the Christian faith causing spiritual contamination and unbiblical compromise.

5. **Correction:** **REPENT** (sincere apology) of their sin (2:16).
“¹⁶ Repent of your sin, or I will come to you suddenly and fight against them with the sword of my mouth.”
6. **Consequence:** Jesus will come to them and fight against them with the sword of His mouth (2:16). **Victors:** I will give the hidden **MANNA** & a white stone with a new **NAME** (2:17).
¹⁷ “Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches. To everyone who is victorious I will give some of the manna that has been hidden away in heaven. And I will give to each one a white stone, and on the stone will be engraved a new name that no one understands except the one who receives it.”

Conclusion

A maturing Christian is Biblical and rejects worldliness

Action Steps: ► Receive Christ as your Savior. ► As a Christian, dedicate your life to Christ. ► Invite someone to next Sunday’s Bible study. ► Attend a small group. ► Pray for friends that need Jesus.