

## Church at Pergamos 312 AD to 606 AD

And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write:

The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this:

'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. 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. So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth. 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.' — Revelation 2:12-17

1. The Ox Anointing Continues
2. War over the Word...
3. The Enemy Couldn't Destroy the Church so he Became a Church.
4. He took his seat in the Temple of God to be worshiped.

The City of Pergamum

1. Pergamum was the chief center of cultural and intellectual life of the "Hellenistic" world. Christ says to the church that He knows where they

dwelling, "where Satan's seat is". It was a political center for the whole region. Known as the Temple Keepers of Asia.

2. The name means "elevation" or "exalted". Many writers have noted that Pergamum comes from the Greek word gamos that means marriage. This letter pictures a church married to the world rather than to Christ.
3. Pergamum had served as the capital of the Roman province of Asia Minor for over 25 years and was an important religious center for a number of pagan cults. It was the first city in Asia to build a temple to Caesar and it became the capital of the cult of Caesar worship. Of Pergamum an ancient writer said it was "given to idolatry more than all Asia.
4. Pergamum had distinguished itself in 29 B.C. by becoming the site of the first cult of a living Roman emperor. A temple was built and dedicated to the joint worship of the goddess Roma (a personification of the spirit of the empire) and the emperor Augustus. 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."
5. Pergamum was also the religious capital of Asia Minor. Its designation as the place "where Satan's seat is" was very appropriate indeed. The temple of Zeus is thought to be the throne of Satan for he felt at home there.
6. Temple to Dionysus

Temple for Emperor Worship

Temple to Zeus

Sanctuary to Asclepius—Asclepion of Pergamum

Goddess Athena—was the Greek virgin goddess of reason, intelligent activity, arts and literature.

7. It was during this time that the papacy began to win religious and political leadership of Western Europe and that Satan established his "seat" within the church combining political and ecclesiastical power. The papacy was a skillful and deceitful blend of paganism with Christianity, truth and error. In exchange for religious tolerance and acceptance, the true principles of Christianity were sacrificed to accommodate pagan beliefs.

8. God's design for His people to live in Babylon for a season. Pergamum was the birthing of that religious system.

## Constantine

In 322 Emperor Constantine "converted" to Christianity, but kept the pagan title Pontifex Maximus. In his efforts to unite his empire in the early 300s, Emperor Constantine blended the interests of pagans and Christians. Concerning Constantine's aims, Church historian F.J. Foakes-Jackson declares, "In dealing with the Church, his object was gradually to transfer from heathenism to Christianity all that had hitherto made it attractive in the eyes of the people.

## Edict of Milan—

Edict of Milan, a proclamation that permanently established religious toleration for Christianity within the Roman Empire. It was the outcome of a political agreement concluded in Milan between the Roman emperors Constantine I and Licinius in February 313. And after the failure of the Great Persecution (initiated by the emperors Diocletian and Galerius in 303–304), the Christian church had begun to recover its stability.

Constantine and Licinius turned their minds to matters affecting the general welfare of the Empire.

“Our purpose is to grant both to the Christians and to all others full authority to follow whatever worship each person has desired, whereby whatsoever Divinity dwells in heaven may be benevolent and propitious to us, and to all who are placed under our authority. Therefore we thought it salutary and most proper to establish our purpose that no person whatever should be refused complete toleration, who has given up his mind either to the cult of the Christians or to the religion which he personally feels best suited to himself. It is our pleasure to abolish all conditions whatever which were embodied in former orders directed to your office about the Christians, that every one of those who have a common wish to follow the religion of the Christians may from this moment freely and unconditionally proceed to observe the same without any annoyance or disquiet.”

In Name Only

Luke 6:46-49—“Why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say? Everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and acts on them, I will show you whom he is like: he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation on the rock; and when a flood occurred, the torrent burst against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. But the one who has heard and has not acted accordingly, is like a man who built a house on the ground without any foundation; and the torrent burst against it and immediately it collapsed, and the ruin of that house was great.”

Barely two decades after Christ’s death and resurrection, the apostle Paul wrote that many believers were already:

- a. “turning away . . . to a different gospel” (Galatians 1:6).
- b. He wrote that he was forced to contend with “false apostles,
- c. deceitful workers”
- e. who were fraudulently “transforming themselves into apostles of Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:13).
- f. One of the major problems he had to deal with was “false brethren” (2 Corinthians 11:26).

Williston Walker, former professor of ecumenical and ecclesiastical history at Yale University, tells us that, in 323, "Constantine was at last the sole ruler of the Roman world. The church was everywhere free from persecution ... But, in winning its freedom from its enemies, it had come largely under the control of the occupant of the Roman imperial throne. A fateful union with the state had begun" (A History of the Christian Church, 1946, p. 111).

## The Beast with two Horns.

Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb and he spoke as a dragon.

Constantine convened the Council of Nicaea in the year 325 as much for political reasons—for unity in the empire—as religious ones. When it came to the Nicene Council, The Encyclopaedia Britannica states: “Constantine himself presided, actively guiding the discussions, and personally proposed . . . the crucial formula expressing the relation of Christ to God in the creed issued by the council. (Godhead and Divinity of the Holy Spirit)

The statement of doctrine they produced was one that all of Christianity would follow and obey, called the “Nicene Creed.” This creed was upheld by the church and enforced by the Emperor

As this new religion-now supported by the Roman emperors grew in power and influence, it sought to become a truly universal church. In its ambition to add more members, many new inductees, with all their old worldly traditions, humanistic pagan practices and worldly ambitions-were welcomed into its fold

Constantine had successfully succeeded in incorporating not only roman pagan customs into this new universal, state sponsored, counterfeit Christian religion, he also brought in and sanctioned all the politicians, the rich, the businessmen, the traders, the tradesmen and merchants of the

Roman empire. They were now by Roman law, allowed to be called "Christian"

Charles Guignebert, professor of the history of Christianity at the University of Paris, described the process: "Now at the beginning of the fifth century, the ignorant and the pseudo/false-Christians thronged into the Church in numbers ... They had forgotten none of their pagan, worldly customs and traditions ... The bishops of that period had to content themselves with redressing, as best they could, and in experimental fashion, the shocking malformations of the Christian faith which they perceived around them ... "[Properly instructing converts] was out of the question; they had to be content with teaching them no more than the symbol of baptism and then (Properly) baptizing them was (postponing) until a later date (along with) the task of eradicating their superstitions, which they preserved intact ... This 'later date' never arrived, and the Church adapted to herself, as well as she could, to them and their worldly customs and beliefs. On their side, they were content to dress up their paganism in a Christian cloak" (The Early History of Christianity , 1927, p. 208-210, emphasis added throughout).

This Counterfeit Christianity had and still has: No True Holy Spirit Conviction, No True Repentance for Sin, No Complete Immersion Water Baptism as adults (Acts 2:38) and No True Holy Spirit Conversion, , No True Holiness, No True Separation from the World and the Things of the World and No True Loyalty or Obedience to the True Word of God and the True Teachings of Jesus Christ.

Daniel 2:40-43

## The Spirit of Balaam— Criticism Vs Fanaticism...External Vs Internal

1. A. Introduction of the spirit of Balaam— Jude 11. Balaam who taught the king of Moab how to induce Israel to sin through intermarriage with the idolatrous Moabites.
  2. The intermarriage problem in Israel continued throughout their history in Canaan until it finally reached its apex in the days of king Ahab of Israel. King Ahab married Jezebel, who was the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Zidonians (1 Kings 16:31). He ruled as a king-priest from the city of Tyre.
- B. The conditions recorded in these verses results from unknowingly embracing the "spirit of compromise" that facilitates the substitution of the Holy Spirit with the spirit of this world. What the enemy can not accomplish in head-to-head battle he easily achieves through this deceptive snare. The Lord Himself warned us about this spirit in Matthew 24.
- C. This is the strategy that Balaam utilized against Israel that the psalmist remembers. When the adversary was unsuccessful in cursing God's chosen people he altered his approach. What he could not perpetuate in direct confrontation he easily accomplished through stumbling blocks and snares facilitated through compromise.



D. The New Testament reminds us of this demonic strategy from the spirit of Balaam in both Jude and the book of Revelations. It is a battle that we must learn to win. It is the spirit of Godly jealousy, as demonstrated through Phinehas, that is the antidote for this dilemma.

E. It was the teaching of Balaam (Teaching of the Nicolaitans) that eventually led Israel into God's judgment. Balaam was unable to curse Israel, therefore he convinced her to compromise her covenant with God by intermingling with Balak and the people of Moab.

And Moses said to them, "Have you spared all the women?" Behold, these caused the sons of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor, so the plague was among the congregation of the LORD.

Now therefore, kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman who has known man intimately. "But all the girls who have not known man intimately, spare for yourselves- Numbers 31:15-18

It would be easy in the culture of that day to embrace idolatry mingled with truth.

F. Ours is an admonition of separation and purity while patiently waiting on the promised union with the Lord Jesus. It is the counsel of "compromise" to lead us away from that position at all costs.

G. The "way of Balaam" is the covetous conduct of the ones structurally described as "hirelings," whose primary motive is to commercialize their divine gift. The "teaching of Balaam" is the teaching of the mercenary ministry counseling the church to abandon Godly separation and noble character in favor of worldly conformity.

2 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

H. Teaching of the Nicolaitans— is a symbolic name of a party that represents the hierarchy of a ruling class over the rest of the people, developing a pecking order of fleshly leadership. So the age of great compromise begins with Pergamos and Jesus has a sharp rebuke for His church

Nikoa= to conquer or overcome

Laos= the laity or the people

What was described as deeds (an undertaking or enterprise) has now matured to a teaching. What was once an influence has now become doctrine and a way of governing. A good translation of Nicolaitan would be "those who prevail over the people.

I. Death of Antipas— He is said to have been one of the first disciples and bishop of Pergamum, and to have been put to death in a tumult there by the priests of Aesculapius, who had a celebrated

health center and temple in that city. According to orthodox tradition Antipas was consecrated bishop of Pergamos by the Apostle John. It is recorded that the prayers of Antipas were so powerful that they drove the demons out of the region and greatly hindered their ability to function in darkness. The demons complain to the pagan priests and then persecuted Antipas and ultimately when he rejected the divinity of the Emperor, they martyred him on the altar of Zeus. In the Temple there was a hollow bronze bull that was used for human sacrifice. The victim would be tied in place inside the bull while a giant fire heated the bronze individually cool the person inside. It is believed this was how the faithful martyr Antipas was executed.

Interestingly, During the late 19th century the entire altar of Zeus that was located in Pergamum was completely dismantled and relocated to Berlin Germany where it was displayed in 1930 in the Pergamon Museum. Shortly thereafter a tyrant by the name of Adolf Hitler emerged.

II. Also, if we look at the original Greek for 'Antipas', it means 'anti-father', or even 'anti-papas'. So Jesus would also be pointing to the fact that during this church age, His people would be against the new system of the 'fathers' or 'popes' that was being setup. And Jesus commended his people for being against the system of the popes

## The Reward

Revelations 2:17— 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.'

## The Hidden Manna

Hebrews 9:3-4—Behind the second veil there was a tabernacle which is called the Holy of Holies, having a golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden jar holding the manna, and Aaron's rod which budded, and the tables of the covenant;

1. Not Outer Court, Not Holy Place...Manna only obtained beyond the veil.
2. Why given in this Age.
3. Given in the Wilderness
4. Manna =The Revelation of Jesus Christ. Revelation 10:8-11. The Hidden Mysteries revealed to Daniel but sealed until the End-Time.
5. Exodus 16:31—The house of Israel named it manna, and it was like coriander seed, white, and its taste was like wafers with honey.
6. Roland Buck and the Bread of Angels—Man did eat the bread of angels; He sent them food in abundance.

John 6:48-51—I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh.”

Jeremiah 33:3 (AMP)—Call to Me and I will answer you, and tell you [and even show you] great and mighty things, [things which have been confined and hidden], which you do not know and understand and cannot distinguish

“Fenced in or otherwise inaccessible by height or fortification”

Colossians 2:2-3—that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God’s mystery, that is, Christ Himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

7. To Perfect the Bride of Christ without spot or wrinkle.

Galatians 1:12—For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

A White Stone

1. Some believe A white stone was used to gain admission to certain events in Roman times. That would imply that those who overcome will be granted admission behind the veil. A small object called a “tessera,” made of wood, stone, clay or bone, conveyed special privileges to its owner. The ancient Romans used tesserae as tokens of admittance to events in the arena.
2. Could have some application since written during Roman Occupation. Familiar to the culture of the day.
3. One of the other explanations of the white stone has to do with the high priest’s breastplate, which contained twelve stones. Each of these stones had the name of one of the twelve tribes of Israel engraved on it (Exodus 28:21).
4. As he ministered in the temple, the high priest bore the names of God’s people into God’s presence. In the same way, the “white stone” with the believer’s name written on it could be a reference to our standing in God’s presence.
5. In the culture of 1st Century Rome the white stone has to do with the ancient Roman custom of awarding white stones to the victors of athletic games. The winner of a contest was awarded a white stone with his name inscribed on it. This served as his “ticket” to a special awards banquet.
6. The white stone inscribed with a personal name presumably served as a pass to a prestigious banquet only attended by the winners.

According to this view, Jesus promises the overcomers entrance to the full revelation of His nature and Kingdom revelation. The “new name” most likely refers to the Holy Spirit’s work of conforming believers to the image of Christ (see Romans 8:29; Colossians 3:10).

7. The Apostle Paul used many Roman sports metaphors to make his points (Phil. 3:12-14; 1 Cor. 9:24-27; 2 Tim. 4:6-8). The writer of the letter to the Hebrews also employed Roman sport imagery of running a race and receiving a winner’s wreath. This kind of analogy much more closely matches the culture of the Roman city of Pergamum.
8. No doubt the persecuted believers, both Jewish and former pagans, were aware of this practice and the elaborate banquets of honor for the overcomers/winners of the race.
9. “This is the Brides Authority”

## A Name Change to the Victorious Ones

1. God occasionally changed someone's name. It was generally done to establish a new identity that God wished them to embody. Acknowledging their spiritual accomplishments, their spiritual potential, and His blessing of them.
2. We can taste the things to come in this age. Hebrews 6:5. Fullness in the age to come.

3. Example of Name Changes—
4. Abram – Abraham: high father – father of many nations. Genesis 17:4-6.
5. Sarai – Sarah: my princess – mother of nations
6. Jacob – Israel: supplanter – he who has the power of God/prince of God. Genesis 32:28
7. Simon – Peter: God has heard – rock/little stone.
8. The natural seed of Abraham and the royal seed of Abraham by faith. (Galatians 3:29) Sand of the sea and stars in the heavens.
9. Since it is given to those who overcome then it would imply a personal name change to reflect a change of character or prophetic promise.
10. Teknon to Huios—Galatians 4.