

Chapter 1

Pergamum: Indiscriminate Tolerance (2:12–17)

1.1 Address opening the letter (2:12a)

Revelation 2:12

And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, 'These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword:

1. **Pergamum:** Located about 55 miles north of Smyrna whose name means parchment where parchment was first manufactured. Parchments were writing material made from animal skin. It was the capital of the province of Asia and used its wealth to build temples devoted to the worship of Zeus, Athena, Dionysos, and Asklepious. Shrines of Asklepious was famous of healing and attracted people from all over the world. They feed non-poisonous snake and the sick had to spent the night and if the snake (god) touches the sick, he/she will be healed. It was the first city in Asia to have temple devoted to the worship of Roman emperor. Worship of the Caesar was the most intense here compared to other cities. City had a very famous library and was second only to the Alexandria and had about two lakh books.

1.2 Attributes of the speaker (2:12b)

Revelation 2:12

And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, 'These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword:

1. **Sharp two-edged sword:** judicial authority of Christ combining the force of a warrior defeating his enemies in battle and pronouncing judgment upon them (Rev 1:16, 2:16, 19:15, 21). Also note that the proconsul of Pergamum has the right of the sword that enables him to kill anyone at will, and sharp two edges sword is an indication of the higher authority of Christ.

1.3 Knowledge about the people of the Church (2:13)

Revelation 2:13

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.

1. **Where you dwell:** Home or permanent residence and has some moral significance. It is frequently used in Revelation to point to a class of people who are not simply on the earth, but whose sole interests are in it and are bounded by it and is not characteristics of Christian Rev 6:10 Phil 3:20
2. **Where the throne of Satan is:** Throne indicates some power and throne of Satan implies Satan controls the affairs, although limited. Emperor worship was most prominent in Pergamum and set as a leading city. A temple was erected to the divine Augustus and goddess Roma was in the city since BC 29. A special priesthood also was devoted. Rome as the most recent and strongest agent of Satan because of its totalitarian demands for absolute allegiance to the state and because in her all paganism and worldliness. This new Caesar-worship was the strongest hindrance to existence and growth of the church.

3. **Hold fast:** In-spite of Satan's permanent residence, they Christians are faithful. Unwillingness to deny faith in Christ.
4. **My name (*to onoma*):** Objective sense of referring to all that Jesus is including His deity, authority, lordship over Gods entire universe. Personal faithfulness to Christ in spite of adverse pressure.
5. **Antipas:** Nothing certain is known about this man except from this verse. Tradition suggests that he was burned to death during the reign of Domitian.
6. **Martyr:** It is a usual NT word for witness. Similar way, Christ also refers himself as the faithful witness. And here, Jesus giving Antipas how own tile because he was true witness. Witness and martyr are gradually becoming synonym Psa 89:37 Act 1:8 Act 22:20 Rev 1:15 Rev 17:6

1.4 State of the Church (2:14)

Revelation 2:14

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.

1. **I have few things against you:** Contrasting the commendation, though few, but serious complaints have been made. The ground of the complaint is the indifference to the teachings of Balaam and hat of Nicolaitans arising out of fear rather than ignorance.
2. **You have there:** Right inside the church there are people who holds false doctrine although the whole church does not hold. Nonetheless, the church is condemned for tolerating them.
3. **Doctrine of Balaam:** The word Balaam in Hebrew means the swallower of the people (Num 22-25, Num. 31:16, 2 Pet 2:15, Jude 11. Balaam sold his gift for profit. His teaching is to eat things scarified to idol and to commit fornication. He was making money by selling his gifts and responsible for defection. (Note Balaam has greater condemnation than Balak). They taught it was legitimate for Christians to participate in pagan festivals. He is the father of religious syncretism (all religions are same).

4. **Stumbling block:** The trap Balaam put was to send Moabite woman to lure Israelites to fornication leading to idolatry and resultant alienation from God.
5. **Eat things sacrificed to idols:** The sins of participation in idolatrous feasts and sexual immorality were so characteristic of the pagan surroundings in Asia Minor. Civil and religious life in this community were so intertwined that intermarriage with the heathen and spiritual compromise were inevitably real issues for the church (1 Cor 8:7-13, 10:19-30, 6:15-18).
6. **Commit sexual immorality:** The literal sin of fornication was closely associate with this city's pagan feasts and was an inescapable consequence of them. The compromise's had given their approval to this practice also. It is no wonder that Christ voices this strong complaint against the church for not raising its voice in protest.

Revelation 2:15

Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.

1. **Doctrine of the Nicolaitans:** They are distinct from the earlier group but similar. The end of both are same, but the paths are different. They stretched the grace and liberty of the Christian faith to the extent of permitting eating meat scarified to idols and fornication (1 Cor 8:4-10). They advocated a harmonious relation with the Greco-roman society.

1.5 Promise of the Lords return (2:16)

Revelation 2:16

Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.

1. **repent (*metanoeson*)**: Lord issues an urgent command to repent. There is an urgency for it they fail, then the Lord will punish the church.
2. **Or else**: If the church fails to repent, there is punishment at the return of Christ.
3. **Come to you quickly**: It refers to his second advent. Quickly implies coming imminent (3:11, 22:7, 12, 20). I will make war is also an eschatological reference (Rev. 19:11-15). If they fail to repent then they will be on the wrong side when Christ returns. It is not any historical judgment but second coming.
4. **I will make war against them**: Since the command to repent is to the church, this war is against all those who fail to repent: that is those who hold the wrong doctrine and those who tolerate them
5. **Sword of My mouth**: The conquest is by force as in Rev 19:11-21. This is a call to the church at Pergamum to demonstrate its genuineness by repenting of its lenience toward the errorists who had become part of that local fellowship and failure to do so would mean dreadful consequence for them

1.6 Command to hear and obey (2:17a)

Revelation 2:17a

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches ...

1. **Hear:** Similar to 2:7 & 11 it calls for attention of listeners that these are something significant.

1.7 Promise to the over comer (2:17b)

Revelation 2:17b

... To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it.”

1. **Overcomes (*nikonti*):** Does not say what to conquer, but the victory over the hostile forces are implied. The grammar suggests that it is not a final victory at the end of life, but one who stands for faith all throughout his life because he keeps overcoming whatever enemy oppose.

2. **Hidden manna:** Jewish tradition taught that Jeremiah hid the ark before the destruction of Jerusalem, and it will not be recovered until Israel is restored in future. Rev 11:19 notes the heavenly location of the true ark of which the earthly ark is a picture Heb 8:5, 9:24. Manna representing the heavenly food of Gods people is in contrast to the earthly food scarified to the idols. Just like the promise to the earlier churches related to OT (Eph to Gen 2, Smyrna to Gen 3), this promise looks back to Ex. 16:32-34. Note, Israel was eating this manna when they met Balaam. Hence it is symbolic of a future reward, an allusion to Christ as the true manna, and the present satisfaction of believers with this spiritual bread as a foretaste of future fullness.
3. **White stone:** Three strong possibility: (i) The breastplate of the high priest had twelve stones, each of which had the name of a tribe written on it (Exod. 28:21). Similarly, a white stone with the name of the individual believer written on it is always in Gods presence. Problem: In OT stones are colored and wore by the High Priest. In Rev the stone is white and given by the high priest to the believer. (ii) The stone may be a translucent precious stone like a diamond on which the name of Christ is written. The name of Christ is written on the foreheads of the saints (3:12; 14:1; 22:4). Problem: There is no secrecy in it. (iii) Roman practice of giving white stone to the victors with their name on it which has special privileges such as entry to the Roman entertainment and banquets. This coincides with the victors feast in Rev 3:20, 19:9 and the allusion of hidden manna to the feast. This is most preferred meaning due to constant reminder of the Messianic feast.

4. **Name no one know except him who receives it:** It is qualitatively superior name. Note that the believer is holding to the name of Jesus and in return he will get a new superior name. It is secretive and trying to understand it is futile. However, new name points to the unique personal marks and signs of Gods adoption due to the new relationship (Gen 32:38, 41:39-45, Isa 62:2, 65:15). The possession of the stone as well as the new name is a peculiar privilege of the believer.

End of Document 2026-10-17
