

Letter to the Church in Pergamum

Sermon by Andy Sochor

Text: Revelation 2:12-17

This is the third in a series of lessons on the seven churches of Asia addressed in Revelation 2-3. Through John, Jesus sent a letter to each church, which He also shared with the others and with us as well. The letters described challenges they were facing, what they were doing well, what they needed to correct, and more. In studying these seven letters, every church can find encouragement and/or warnings that apply to them. We will notice these are we go through our study.

About the City of Pergamum

- Not a commercial center like Ephesus or Smyrna – geographic position was not conducive to that
- Had a famous library with over 200,000 books
- But it was the place “where Satan dwells” (v. 13) – temple of a healing “god” which had the form of a serpent
- Like Smyrna, this was the only time the city or church is mentioned in the New Testament

Letter to the Church

- Description of Jesus – the one with the sharp two-edged sword (v. 12); comes out of His mouth (Revelation 1:16); refers to His word (Hebrews 4:12)
- Current circumstances – they were dwelling where Satan’s throne it (v. 13), figuratively; one of their own had been killed (v. 13); Antipas was a faithful “witness,” the Greek word is where we get the term martyr; there were also false teachers among them (v. 14-15)
- Commendations – they were holding fast to the name of Christ (v. 13); they did not deny Him, even during the persecution that claimed one of their own (v. 13)
- Condemnations – some among them held to the teachings of Balaam/Nicolaitans (v. 14-15), which implies their tolerance of it; they held fast to the name of Christ, but not the purity of doctrine; teachings of the Nicolaitans included adopting pagan worship and committing acts of immorality (v. 14)
- Punishment for sin – the Lord will make war against the false teachers (v. 16); the implication is that those who tolerated them would be caught up in that punishment
- Reward for faithfulness – hidden manna, white stone, new name (v. 17); the Lord would sustain them and claim them as His own

Main Lesson

- Don't compromise the truth – they recognized who Jesus was and refused to deny Him, even in the face of persecution; this is certainly good; however, they tolerated those who taught a different doctrine; this would eventually lead to sin; they were on the “slippery slope” where it was inevitable without repentance
- This is the lesson for us today – we must not accept a different gospel (Galatians 1:6-9); if we tolerate those who teach error, we lose our fellowship with God (2 John 9-11); those who teach error should be marked and avoided (Romans 16:17), not welcomed and accepted; this will become increasingly tempting as society becomes more godless and persecution comes

Conclusion

- We need to hold onto our faith, even in the face of persecution – but we also need to defend the truth; if we compromise the truth and tolerate false teachers, we can lose our fellowship with God
- Let us value the truth because it is from God – hold fast to it as we hold fast to the Lord