

The Letter to Pergamos. Revelation 2:12-17

The man with a two edged sword. What is a Biblical two edged sword? It's not made steel. No, there are two different two edged swords, the first is the word of God in Hebrews 4:12 and the second, we're told Jesus has a tongue like a two edged sword Revelation 1:16.

Pergamos is described as like a sin city, a Las Vegas of its day, where Satan's throne is. Rather than gambling it's more likely that the draw was false religion, serving Greek and Roman gods, all totally fictitious and many involved the concept of sex between gods and women, which the Bible tells us is particularly heinous to God Genesis 6:1-2 and which ultimately led to the flood that wiped out every human bar Noah and his family.

Jesus acknowledged and praised this church's work, their refusal to deny him and their solidarity even when one of their members, Antipas was martyred, sadly that's the only mention in the Bible Antipas gets. That's the good bits, now let's get down to the nitty-gritty.

Tolerance of a few who preach the doctrine of Balaam. The original Balaam was a prophet with a Spiritual gift in that whom he blessed, God blessed and nice things happened to them. Conversely, whom he cursed, God made horrible things happen to them. The Children of Israel were passing through Moab much to the concern of King Balak of Moab who engaged the services of Balaam. However, to cut a long story short, instead of cursing Israel 3 times as demanded by Bakak, Balaam blessed them 4 times. However it seems that Balaam did give Balak a tip and he took Balaam's advice and sent Moab's women in to seduce the men of Israel and persuade them to worship the Moabite gods. This worked well for Balak and 24,000 Israelites died in a plague sent by God. Numbers chapter 25.

So, fast forward 3,000 years and it seems that there were a number of women in the church at Pergamos who were seducing the men and corrupting them to worship other gods. That's why they've been likened to Balaam. This is how Peter puts it - 2 Peter 2:12-17. Jesus's gripe wasn't so much that these people were in the congregation, rather that they were tolerated and allowed to carry on, worse still, they spread their evil ideology and took others off the path of righteousness. Is there a temptation to look the other way and compromise when church attendance is a bit sparse to avoid confrontation and a split? Where do you draw the line, and when?

There were other bad apples within the congregation; the Nicolaitans. There's no specific information about them but we know from the letter to Ephesus God hates their practices and in the letter to Pergamos, He also hates their doctrines. It maybe that Nicolaitans and Balaamites were a mixture with some subscribing to both traditions.

Jesus warns these heretics to - Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth. Revelation 2:16 NKJ. What do you think that means?

Jesus will use the word of God to convict anyone practicing and following these heresies. Romans 8:34. He will not be interceding for them, rather He will attack them with the word of God.

A promise to those who persevere. Hidden manna. Manna was a God given staple food, given to sustain a million people wandering in the desert. Without it, they surely would

have starved to death Exodus 16:1-5. Manna in the Bible is a symbol of God's provision.

Overcomers will be given a new name that no one knows. I really look forward to receiving my new name though I confess I have no idea why I might want a name that nobody knows or what purpose it will serve, but in faith I do know that like all of God's gifts, it will be very precious to me.

Positives-

The church stood fast in a difficult situation rather than just relocate.

The hostility around the church didn't prevent it from doing its work, evangelising even after one of their members was murdered for his faith.

Negatives-

The church acquiesced to compromise and did nothing about it.

Some members were being seduced and led astray and still the church did nothing.

Lessons we can learn-

If we find ourselves in a place where sin is prevalent, don't move, just stand steadfast and be a beacon of light. It may not be easy and you may well draw antagonism and hostility.

Our enemy knows our weaknesses and attacks them, sexual sin was a lead into idolatry in this instance but beware, that isn't Satan's only tool. Alcohol, greed, jealousy, ambition are just as potent.

Don't be fooled into thinking that compromise is acceptable to God.

Compromise is a path to lost salvation. That's why how important righteousness is and why we should strive to follow Jesus.

Call out heresy in its early stages and before it gets a foothold.

Today, Pergamos is called Bergama. There are a few known believers around Bergama, but no churches.