

The Revelation

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Revelation 2:12-17

Introduction

- Pergamum: Sometimes called Pergamos, the feminine form of the name
- Neither as rich or as large as Ephesus or Smyrna, Pergamum was the capital of the Roman province of Asia and had been the region's capital dating back 400 years.
- It was built on top of a high hill overlooking the Caicus River valley and viewed the Mediterranean some 15 miles away.
- It was a center of government and culture, boasting the second largest library in the world with some 200,000 scrolls and was the inventor of parchment which ultimately replaced papyrus as the writing paper of choice.
- The city saw itself as a defender of Greek culture and religion. It's central deity was Asclepius, the god of healing. Long before the Romans, it built a giant altar in front of the Temple of Zeus so that from a distance the altar and the temple looked like a giant throne. Fittingly, it was also the center of Caesar worship.
- In sum, Pergamum was a city of government, education, medicine, Greco-Roman culture,.....and Caesar was Lord of all.

Vs 12

- The Roman governor in Pergamum was like Pontius Pilate, an "ius gladii" governor, meaning he had the right and power of the sword. But Christ is He who holds the sharp, two-edged sword, the real power.

Vs 13

- “I know where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is...”: what a wonderful place to be a Christian!! But remember the words of William Barclay’ “The principle of the Christian life is not escape, but conquest.” You cannot win the battle if you let fear make you abandon the field.
- Tertullian, the early church father, says Antipas was placed inside a bronze bull and slowly roasted to death. Remember that the Greek word for witness and martyr was the same. Note also that the Risen Christ gives Antipas his own title, calling Himself “faithful witness” in 1:5 and 3:14.

Vs 14 - 15

- Here as we have seen in Ephesus is the heresy of the Nicolaitans. Referring back to Numbers 25, we have the spiritual grandchildren of Balaam. (look back to the letter to Ephesus, 2:6).

Vs 16

- Repent. Change. For 2000 years people have tried to bend the Word of God to fit them and the way they practice life rather than allowing the Holy Spirit to reshape them and conform their lives to The Word.
- “I will make war against THEM”: not the whole church, but with the heretics, though the church is accountable for allowing them a space inside the fellowship.
- His sword is His Word. When we are judged in light of God’s Word our failure and sin will be there for all to see.

Vs 17

- Hidden manna: “I am the bread of Life.” John 6:31-35
- The white stone and a new name: in ancient times juries used white and black stones for their verdicts: white for acquittal, black for guilty; in ancient culture the victorious were often given new names. Octavian, after his victory over Antony and Cleopatra, secured the throne for

himself and took the name Caesar Augustus. In Scripture, Abram is victoriously faithful and God gives him a new name, Abraham. Likewise Saul becomes Paul and Simon becomes Peter. So to the faithful, Christ will hail you as not guilty and victorious!!