

5.

A name that overcomes worldliness Revelation 2: 12-17



KICK OFF

How easy is it to detect 'false teaching'?



KEY VERSE

Revelation 2:17 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.'



BIG IDEA

Locating our identity and character in Christ will help us overcome worldliness



INVESTIGATE

Read Revelation 2: 12 - 17

1. What is commendable about the church at Pergamum?

2. What is Christ displeased with about this church at Pergamum?

3. What does it mean for Pergamum to be Satan's *home* and for him to have a *throne* there?

4. What does the sword image or symbol represent in verse 12 and 16?(see also 1:16; 19:15, 21).

5. What might hidden manna and a white stone with a new name on have to do with the issues in this church?



DIG DEEPER

13 Christ assures them that he knows where they live and the particular issues they face there. It is both the place where Satan has his throne (i.e. rules as king) and the place where he dwells (i.e. considers home). Such a place would be very uncomfortable for a Christian, whose home is heaven and whose king is Jesus. Yet they are holding fast to Jesus, even in the midst of such difficulty. The pressure had recently caused the death of one church member called Antipas, who was faithful to Jesus even "unto death" (see 2:10). This endurance under fire is commended by Christ.

14-15 Jesus has, however, a few things against the church (the word does mean only *a few*, rather than "here's a long list"!). The one he singles out for special mention is the fact that among their number are those who hold to the teaching of Balaam and those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans, rather than "holding fast" to Jesus' name (verse 13, same word for hold). It is unlikely that those holding to this teaching associated it with the Old Testament character Balaam themselves; Jesus is drawing this negative connection to make a point about the destructive nature of the heresy being propagated. The stumbling block Balaam put before the Israelites was a mixture of sexual immorality and spiritual adultery. It is described in Numbers 25:1-2 and Balaam is specifically identified as the genius behind it

6. The issue of sexual immorality is always a relevant one for any church. Why is that?



In what ways do we tolerate sexual immorality, or tolerate teaching which allows or promotes it?

7. The issue of food sacrificed to idols is not always an immediately relevant one. It is a live issue for some who interact with certain eastern religious practices or who may be confronted with Halal food over which an Islamic prayer has been said.

We have other idols, perhaps – money, success, power.

Are there also practices with which Satan is ‘at home’ and which the world encourages which we need to avoid getting ensnared in, such as debauched weekends, binge drinking, or even getting drunk on fine claret or champagne at a civilized dinner party?

How do the culture, values, and ‘worship’ of The City subtly lure us away from wholehearted devotion to our true King...?

Resources for further study

- Poythress, V The Returning King P&R 2000
- Gatiss L. Revelation Notes from St. Helens Bishopgate
Central Bible Focus
- Barnet P. Apocalypse Now and Then



Praise God for the challenges raised Pray for others in your group
by God’s word through this study



How do we apply this passage in our daily life?

in Numbers 31:16. It is about provoking God’s anger by leading his people astray into immorality and the worship of other gods (which two things are so often linked). Jesus’ point is that heretics are encouraging the same behaviour in the church in Pergamum as Balaam encouraged Israel to on the edge of the Promised Land in Moab. When in Moab God’s people should not live like the Moabites do; when in the place where Satan dwells and rules, one should not live like his worldly people - or compromise with the pervasive idolatry and immorality there.

17 All the churches are called to hear this warning, lest they too follow the same path (which some have, see 2:18-29). The promise for the one who conquers and overcomes the temptations to conform and compromise is somewhat enigmatic. “Hidden manna” certainly alludes to the divine provision for the Israelites in the desert (see Exodus 16).

This could be a reference to God’s word again: the (hidden?) food Jesus ate of which his disciples knew nothing (John 4:32) was not bread but every word which comes from the mouth of God (Deut 8:3). He himself is also living bread (John 6).

The stone with a new *name* on it (alluding to Isaiah 62:2) probably refers to their uniqueness, and encourages them not to let their identity become bound up with their residence in a sinful city but rather be allied to the future city which is their real home (see 3:12). In a place which ostracised or alienated Christians, Christ pledges to accept them.

PRAISE God that Jesus rules

CONFESS TO GOD our lack of discernment of false teaching

PRAY for us to live and bear a clear testimony

PRAY ALSO for our Church to be a clear light in the CBD



Next Week:
WINTER BREAK
Resumes 19th July
Revelation 2: 18-29

A star who overcomes darkness