

The Revelation of Jesus Christ: Behold I Am Coming Soon

The Letter to the Church in Pergamum, 2:12-17, pt 2

Today we continue with the Letter to the Church in Pergamum.

The Lord Jesus commended these believers for remaining faithful and loyal to Him even though they were living “where Satan dwells.” In particular they were commended for maintaining their faith in Christ despite great pressure to compromise and acquiesce to the demands of the satanic culture and climate of Pergamum.

Nevertheless, the Lord Jesus had a few things against these believers. Apparently, they had subtly, and silently given a place at the table, so to speak, for people that were subscribing to the wrong teachings of Balaam and the Nicolaitans.

At issue was the temptation to compromise and acquiesce to the immoral ways of the surrounding culture, which demanded a lifestyle contrary to the sound doctrine of holiness and righteous living which separated God’s people from the sinful satanic influences around them.

Though John doesn’t give any particular details it is apparent that the Balaamites and Nicolaitans had devised doctrinal schemes designed to allow those who followed their abhorrent teaching to coexist in the church and in the world. Obviously, this activity was something that was intolerable in the eyes of the Lord Jesus no doubt because to yield to this kind of compromise would both shipwreck their faith and irrevocably damage their testimony built on the Word and Testimony of Christ!

- I. The Damaging Effects of the False teachings of the Balaamites and Nicolaitans
 - A. The Balaamites dangerous teaching
 1. Remember, Balaam’s name means, “a swallower of people.” And in this case as it relates to the believers, they would be swallowed up and washed out, and lose their distinct identity and followers of Christ.
 2. They taught that a Christian could participate in the pagan rituals, including the feasts and sacrifices and still join the church for the worship of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - B. The Nicoataitans: “Likewise, you also have...”
 1. Most likely a similar teaching as the Balaamite teaching but more subtle.
 - a) These teachers conquered their students most likely by smooth talk and perhaps flattery. The root meaning is, “lovers of people.”
 - (1) “People Pleasers” comes to mind.
 - (2) “God just wants you to be happy.”

2. It is my estimation that these teachers' aim was to convince them that the only way to a happy Christian life was to shun the hardships that accompany the Christian life and embrace a life of ease and indulgence.
 - a) To at once, value their Christian faith, but enjoy the bounty of the world (or culture) in which they live.
 - (1) "live their best life now."
 - b) These false teachers were convincing many from the church in Pergamum to participate in the pagan practices including sexual immorality and idolatry.
- C. God's word had settled these issue decades before as we shall see by the following examples:
 1. (Acts 15:29) The Jerusalem Council met and determined the following requirements for Gentile believers:
 - a) "You are to
 - (1) Abstain from food sacrificed to idols,
 - (2) Abstain from blood,
 - (3) Abstain from eating the meat of strangled animals, and
 - (4) Abstain from sexual immorality."
 - b) They concluded simply, but decisively, with the statement,
 - (1) "You will do well to avoid these things."
 2. James wrote a stern warning to the compromising believers within the Church,
 - a) (James 4:4) "You adulterous people, don't you know that **friendship with the world is hatred toward God**? Anyone who chooses to be **a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.**"
 3. Peter was a little more encouraging by saying,
 - a) (1 Peter 2:11-12) "Dear friends, I urge you as **aliens and strangers in the world**, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. Live such **good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day He visits us.**"
 4. The Balaamite teaching overtly encourages believers to compromise on each and every point listed above, in order for them to be accepted in the city "where Satan has his throne."
 - a) The most compromising thing a believer can do is to live and act in a way that causes that person to *blend in with the world*.
 - (1) A Christian that thinks that they can live immorally just like the world, and yet hold a good Christian testimony– that Christian has taken the bait of the Balaamites.
 - b) But that is exactly what false teachers try to do; their aim is to teach believers how to live indistinguishable from the world yet be comfortable in their claim to be a true follower of Jesus Christ.

- D. At the core, their teaching fundamentally mtrain Christians to think nothing of being both **comfortable in the world and comfortable in the Church**.

II. The characteristics of False Teachers.

- A. First, they are most dangerous because they come from within the Church (Revelation 2:14,15)

1. Jesus warned in Matthew 7:15, "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in **sheep's clothing**, but inwardly they are **ferocious wolves**."
 - a) Jude :4, "For certain men whose condemnation waswritten about long ago have **secretly slipped in among you**."
2. Paul warned in Acts 20:29-30, "I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them."
 - a) Distort/ **twist** the Truth: many today claim to have a word from God, or a new teaching.
 - (1) To serve their own ends
 - (a) Jude :4b: "They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Christ our only Sovereign and Lord."
 - (i) Compare: **Titus 1:9**: "For the **grace of God** has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, **training us** to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives **in the present age**."
 - (2) They claim a "right to authority" over men and angels
 - (a) Jude :8-10
 - (3) Their words and teaching appeal to the "lustful desires of sinful human nature." (2 Peter 2:18)
 - (a) Consider the "Prosperity Gospel" of many TV preachers! "Health, Wealth and Happiness."
 - b) They, "draw away disciples after them"
 - (1) 1 Timothy 4:1, "The Spirit clearly says that in the latter times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons."
 - (2) 2 Peter 2:2, "**Many** will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute."
 - (3) Jude :4 says that they "secretly slipped in among you". No doubt inferring a general acceptance of their presence.

B. General character profile of false teachers

1. They are greedy, fleecing the flock of God (2 Peter 2:3)
2. They make up stories. Not just nice anecdotes. But...
 - a) 1 Timothy 4:1: doctrine devised by demons!

3. They are hypocritical liars with no conscience when they lie (1 Timothy 4:2)
 - a) "Whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron."
 4. Some are legalist, enslaving people in legalism (1 Timothy 4:3a)
 - a) Whereas, Christ called us to freedom
 - (1) (Galatians 5:1) "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery."
 5. They follow the desires of the sinful nature (2 Peter 2:10)
 - a) **!! look at 2 Peter 2:7-9a. Here is comfort given to believers who suffer torment because of the wickedness afflicting them as they live in a depraved world. The Spirit encourages believers that loyalty to the Lord will be rewarded and deliverance will come. But those who follow ungodliness and ungodly teaching in hopes of having peace in this world will be punished on the day of judgment!**
 - (1) **DON'T GIVE WAY TO THE EASY WAY!**
 6. They seek pleasure continually even while meeting with the church (2 Peter 2:13)
 7. They are "full of **adultery**, they **never stop sinning**; they **seduce the unstable**; they are experts in **greed**".
 8. They are detestable before God
 - a) (2 Peter 2:22) "Of them the proverbs are true: 'A dog returns to its vomit,' and, 'A sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing mud.'"
- C. What is their end?
1. Utter and final judgment
 - a) Jude :13 tells us that they are unredeemable, and that for them the, "**blackest darkness has been reserved forever.**" (cf. 2 Pe 2:17)

III. (Revelation 2:16-17) The Counsel and Promise of the Lord Jesus

A. (2:16) The Counsel

1. "Repent therefore!"
 - a) What is their repentance? What must they do?
 - (1) Expel these false teachers
 - (2) **NO LONGER TOLERATE THEIR PRESENCE.**
 - (a) The Corinthians tolerated an unrepentant sexually immoral man who claimed to be a believer. This kind of tolerance was not something to be proud of. (1 Cor. 5:1-13)
 - (i) Discipline him
 - (ii) He is unrepentant so expel him
 - (iii) If he remains with them unrepentant, it will have a damaging effect on the church.

(b) We must not give quarter to false teachers or false teaching.

(i) **2 Chronicles 19:2**, “Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the Lord?”

(3) Minister to those who have been deceived with the **goal of repentance**.

(a) (2 Timothy 2:25-26) “Those who oppose him (the Lord’s servant) he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.”

2. “Or else!”

a) If the church refuses to act in love against these false teachers the Lord will come and “make war against them with the sword of My mouth.”

(1) Take heed from the Lord! **His goal is not to provide a nice place where false teachers and unrepentant sinners feel comfortable!**

(a) The Church is to be a place where such people hear the Word of Truth and are **convicted of their sins and repent!**

(i) **The Truth spoken graciously, kindly, lovingly, yet firmly and without apology.**

(a) 2 Timothy 2:24-26

B. (2:17) The Promise

1. The person with the “ear to hear” will “hear what the Spirit says...”

a) Act in obedience to the Command to throw out the false teaching and to correct those who fell under their false teaching.

b) These who act *are Overcomers*

(1) They are overcomers because they are born of God!

(2) They are overcomers because they act in obedience.

2. The promised blessings:

a) I didn’t read anything that provided me with conclusive information as to what is the “white stone” and what the “new name” means. But it is good! And it is something to believe in and look forward to.

IV. Application:

A. Sources and Influencers:

1. What do you know about people and sources who influence you through their books, periodicals, television, internet and social media?

2. How tolerant are you when you hear them when they are advocating for things that God clearly forbids and warns against?

3. Examine your sources of “teaching,” “doctrine,” “devotionals,” “preaching,” etc.

a) Do they contradict the clear teaching of Scripture concerning the foundational truths of Christianity? Of God, Christ, man, the Gospel?

b) Do they affirm a lifestyle that God clearly rejects?

c) If so, what must you do NOW out of love and obedience to Christ? Will you?