

SALVATION IN SYMBOLS & SIGNS

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Corresponds to Program 9

PERGAMOS-ELEVATION STUDY GUIDE

THE COMPROMISING CHURCH

Revelation 2:12-17

The third church on our journey through time is Pergamos, representing the period from 313 AD to 538 AD.

Pergamos was the capital city of the Roman Empire in the province of Asia. It was a wealthy city, and was a center of emperor worship, as well as many other pagan gods. This then will help to identify the condition of the church during this period of history.

“And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, ‘These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword: ‘I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells’ Revelation 2:12-13 NKJV.

Satan’s throne is key to understanding the developments taking place in this church period. The Bible identifies where Satan seeks to establish his throne.

“How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High’” Isaiah 14:12-14.

Satan wants to sit where God sits, “in the mount of the congregation.” Satan wants God’s place in God’s church and to be worshipped by God’s people. Paul describes the same design in 2 Thessalonians 2:

“Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God” 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 NKJV.



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The principle under which Satan works his way into God’s church is self-exaltation. He exalts man in the place of God. Man’s word, man’s teaching, and man’s authority all replace the word, teaching and authority of the Bible. That is why the “sharp two-edged sword” is mentioned in the message to this church—because it represents the word of God (Hebrews 4:12).

This was a time when God’s word was compromised by the church fathers. After the heavy persecution many Christians welcomed an opportunity for peace and prosperity. It was Constantine, the new Emperor of Rome who offered prosperity to the church and the church fathers were all too willing to embrace it. Those who opposed them were symbolized by “anti-pas,” and became faithful martyrs for God.

Antipas, Balaam and Balack

As none of these names represent historical figures that can be found in New Testament history they must be understood symbolically. Anti-pas can be translated “anti-papa” and therefore would represent those who refused to adhere to the compromise of the church fathers.

The doctrine of Balaam refers to the Old Testament prophet who compromised his faith for money. And Balack was the

KEY SCRIPTURES

Hebrews 4:12 LIVING WORD OF GOD

Isaiah 14:12 FALL OF LUCIFER

PERGAMOS—(ACROPOLIS OR ELEVATION)

313-538 A.D. — Age of Constantine – Church elevated in the world

Moabite king who worked with Balaam to cause Israel to fall by getting them to intermingle with pagan women (Numbers 22-25).

These names then represent the history of the church during this time period. After AD 313, Emperor Constantine made Christianity a legal religion, and even professed to be a follower of Jesus. Under his reign, false doctrine began to be accepted into the church, this made it easy for pagans to become Christians, and not have to give up much of their former beliefs. Here we find a mingling of truth and error allowing the pagan elements to enter the church for the sake of prosperity. Those who opposed the fathers were persecuted.

The meaning of Pergamos is “height”, or “elevation”, and fitly represents that period of the Christian church,

beginning with the reign of the Emperor Constantine in AD. 313. It was then that the power which had put the Christians to death espoused the cause of the church, and by rewards, edicts, and promised promotions to office in the government, sought to induce the people to become Christians. This brought a flood of worldliness and corruption into the church. Many of the heathen rites and ceremonies previously introduced into the Christian religion, including the heathen festival, Sunday (sun’s day), were then established by law, the result being that the first day of the week took the place of the Sabbath of the Bible.

May God bless you as you continue your journey through the study of the seven churches! ★

Personal Application

Is it your desire to continue studying God’s Word to be able to discern truth from error? _____

