

September 18, 2022 - Revelation 2:12-17 - "The Church of Pergamos"

Introduction:

Bamboo Harvester was a palomino Quarter horse who had a second named, Pumpkin. However, pumpkin also had a stage name. If you are an avid lover of horses and film, chances are you have heard of this horse from the 1960s hit TV show, *Mister Ed*. *Mister Ed* was an American sitcom that lasted six seasons from 1961-1966. The sit-com centered around a man named Wilbur Post and his mischievous palomino horse "Mister Ed" who wasn't just a horse but he was a talking horse. Mr. Ed was one of my favorite TV shows growing up. I often wondered how they got that horse to talk; until I learned it was a trick done by a horse trainer who would tickle his hoof and trained him to move his lips.

Long before Walter Brooks got his inspiration for a talking horse in his books, the Bible God's book recorded an actually horse who spoke in Numbers 22. It was of the horse family and we know it as Balaam's donkey. That's right a talking mule. God had to teach this prophet for hire named "Balaam" a lesson from about compromise. Balak the Moabite king had asked God's prophet to curse the Israelites. Why; because he had compromise his convictions. John uses this true story when Balaam counseled Balak, he **taught Balak to put a stumbling** block before the children of Israel. The stumbling block was connected with idolatry (to eat things sacrificed to idols) and sexual immorality. If the church in Pergamos had those who did hold the doctrine of Balaam, it showed they had tendencies towards both idolatry and immorality. Sexual immorality marked the whole culture of the ancient Roman Empire. It was simply taken for granted, and the person who lived by Biblical standards of purity was considered strange.

The Church of Pergamos is known as the church of compromise. This Church is a picture of any church that courts the world, any church that marries paganism in any form.... The church at Pergamos is also a picture of any Christian who has one foot in the world and one in the church.

I. The Church at Pergamos --- Church age 312 - 606 AD / Background

1. The word Pergamos means "height or elevation" and was famous for its Greek pagan temples and the invention and manufacture of parchment. Parchment is a writing material developed from animal skin. Apparently it was first developed in this area and thus the city of Pergamos took its name from that. It was famous for its library, which consisted of no fewer than 200,000 parchment rolls. It was second only to the unique library at Alexandria!

2. Pergamos was one of the great religious and culture centres of Asia Minor. There were temples to the Greek gods Athene and Zeus. Aesculapius (*es-ka-laf-pe-us*) was the god of medicine in Greek and Roman mythology.

3. The city was the centre of Caesar worship for the whole province. In fact, this was the first city in the ancient Roman world to build a temple to Caesar. The emperor worship had reached the point of cultic form. He was no longer seen as a political or military leader but he was seen as

a god. And in this city they built the first temple to Caesar. Caesar instead of Christ Men was Lord and Christians were required to pay homage to Him as a god.

4. From the year 300 to 600 under the Roman Empire and the direction of Constantine in those early years, the church married the world. Heathen priests became Christian priests. Heathen temples became Christian churches. All children were required to be christened, they were therefore supposedly made Christians by putting a little water on their heads. Heathen days of feasting and drunkenness were made in to Christian days like Estar and all other sort of saint days. And Christianity got lost in all of this. It was merely a mass state religion.

I The Commendation of Pergamos' Church

1. At some point during the three years ministering of the Apostle Paul in Ephesus (Acts 19:10), the word traveled by Christians north through all of Asia Minor. During that period of time, it is believed, the church at Pergamos was founded. They existed at the headquarters of satanic seat or throne- that is where Satan steals the glory due to God and gives it to Satan's puppets.

It was not easy to be a Christian in Pergamos, as the believers experienced great pressure to compromise or leave the faith. Although they lived in a city where Satan had his throne, the worship of many gods, many remained true to the name of the Lord – Antipas had even been martyred for his faith. Tradition says, he was burned to death inside a brass bull hallowed out then set on fire and put him in it.

2) The description of Christ in vv. 12 refers back to how He is vividly portrayed in 1:16, "...out of His mouth came a sharp double-edged sword." Jesus uses the sword of His truth to oppose falsehood. Our Savior's words are life-changing. Observes the "word of God is [Hebrews 4:12](#).

3) (vs 13) Jesus tells His church, "I know where you live-where Satan has his throne" This may refer to a massive throne-like altar of Zeus that overlooked the city. Our Lord understands that His people are living in an unbelieving world; He is well aware of the continuous pressure of pervasive, anti-Christian influences. His followers are sheep among wolves.

The same holds true for today-we are besieged with ungodly worldviews and secular philosophies. We are in enemy-occupied territory! There was a real church there, a saved church, waging an uncompromising war right at the throne of Satan. They were doing well enough to be commended. "I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is and you hold fast My name and did not deny My faith." They were true. I say it again, true faith is not fragile, it is indestructible. It survives everything, even the onslaughts of hell.

II. The Compromising Church of Pergamos

1. In verse 14 He says, "But I have a few things against thee," And He directs Himself at two heresies. One identified with an Old Testament character, the other identified with a New Testament period character, anyway, by the name of Nicholas. He says you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam.

a) What is the doctrine of Balaam? We must go back to Numbers 22-25 to find the teaching of Balaam. He was a prophet for hire. He was hired by Balak, the king of the Moabites, to curse Israel because they were a threat to him. The first time King Balak of Moab went to Balaam and they said, "We will pay you if you will pronounce a curse on Israel." Peter says about Balaam, looking into the past and into Balaam's heart by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he says, "Balaam, the son of Beor, loved the wages of unrighteousness." He loved to get paid for doing evil. He preferred money to obeying God. He preferred pay to faithfulness. And God had to intervene to prevent him from pronouncing a curse on Israel because his true incentive in life was the love of money.

2. God send an angel as he was riding on his donkey, then the angel of the Lord stood in a narrow path of the vineyard with a wall on this side and a wall on that side. This poor donkey is doing what is reasonably instinctive in reacting to a flaming angel with a sword in hand.

Our Lord makes a complete fool out of Balaam the prophet and stops him because he was ready to prostitute his prophetic gift. (Read the passage and comment)

3. Three times Balaam tried to curse Israel, but each time God stopped him. Since Balaam was unsuccessful in cursing the Israelites, he decided to corrupt them. Therefore, he advised Balak to seduce the Israelite men (Num. 31:16), which resulted according to Numbers 25:1-2 in idolatry and fornication, which was caused by compromise. The doctrine of Balaam included teaching that the people of God can inter- marry with the heathen and thus will become what the heathen are. This is compromise.

2 Corinthians 6 where Paul says, "What fellowship has light with darkness... It was a question of being soft and tolerant to those teaching error. There were some in the church teaching this and were allowed to feel comfortable. We observe from scripture that 24,000 Israelites died (Num. 25:3-9 & 31:16). Therefore, we can conclude that the doctrine of Balaam was a lowering of the standard of separation God expects from His people and a compromise with the world. All of this is ungodly compromise! It begins subtly, slowly but progressively until it gets a hold.

--- Illustration:

When the federal income tax was signed into law in 1913, a senator speaking in opposition to the bill stated: "If we allow this 1 percent foot-in-the-door, at some future date it might rise to 5 percent." Look at how we are taxed now! Compromise is being tether to the world and accepting the worlds view on sinfulness. The society we live in today has no respect for the moral law....

a) The word "Nicolaitans" is the product of combining the word "Laos" (people), with the word `Niklam (to conquer).The Nicolaitans were a sect of the Gnostics, who taught impure doctrines and followed impure practices. It literary was the clergy lording it over the laity. They are also supposed to have derived their origin from Nicolas, one of the seven deacons mentioned in Acts 6:5. The Nicolaitanes taught the community of wives, that adultery and fornication were things indifferent, that eating meats offered to idols was quite lawful; and mixed several pagan rites with

the Christian ceremonies. From secular writing of this time we find that Augustine, Clemens Alexandrinus, and Tertullian, have spoken largely concerning the Nicolaitans. Some churches today need to be challenged and called to repent!

III The Command to Repent vv.17-18

1. In verse # 17 He promises two rewards for overcomers. **The first** is the "hidden manna", a reference to the pot of manna that was stored inside the Ark of the Covenant, a reminder of God's faithful provision. Just as ancient Israel was fed by manna in the wilderness, so under the New Covenant we have our soul's hunger satisfied by Christ. Jesus declared, "I am the Bread of Life. All who come to me will never go hungry. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. All who eat of this bread will live forever."

2.The second reward is a white stone inscribed with a new name. Black and white stones were used by judges to convey their verdict. A black stone indicated a guilty verdict and conveyed judgment. A white stone indicated acquittal or pardon. On this white stone is a new name. God occasionally grants new names to mark a new relationship or responsibility. For example, Abram and Saul (of Tarsus) became Abraham and Paul. It was customary in the days of the early church for converts to take on a new name at baptism, to signify one's life changing rebirth (and because many-Gentile converts-were named after pagan deities).

Conclusion:

Compromise is a very risky business and spiritual Compromise is also very dangerous, such is a story told by D. L. Moody.

Compromise is a spiritual plague sweeping across Christendom. The second definition of compromise is "to make a dishonorable or shameful concession." This form of compromise is always wrong. Especially when it comes to the things of God. Christian compromise is making shameful concessions to God's Word and Will.