The Church in Pergamum (Pergamos)

- Pergamum:  
  - The Capital of Asia Minor  
  - 45 miles North of Smyrna  
  - Centre of politics, power, heathen worship and learning - decisions here affected all of Asia Minor  
  - King Eumenes II (197-159 BC) instituted a library of 200,000 volumes given as a gift from Anthony to Cleopatra, second only to the library in Alexandria  
  - Built the world’s first psychiatric hospital  
  - Temples of Zeus (king of the gods)  
  - Altars offered to Asklepios (god of protection; guardian)  
  - Serpents were put on the altars and worshipped  
  - Emperor worship (again, a tough spot for Christians)  
  - Every citizen was to burn incense to him 2 times per year.

Revelation 2:12-17, “To the angel of the church in Pergamum write:  
These are the words of Him who has the sharp, double-edged sword.  
13 I know where you live – where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, not even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city – where Satan lives.

14 Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: there are some among you who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin so that they ate food sacrificed to idols and committed sexual immorality. 15 Likewise, you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

16 Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

17 Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give that person a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to the one who receives it.

The Description of Jesus

Vs. 12, “These are the Words of Him who has the sharp, double-edged sword”

- Remember: every description has to do with the content of the letter

- The Sword is The Word of God
  
  Hebrews 4:12, “For the Word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”

- Sharp (Hebrews “Sharper”)
- Double-Edged

- The Word of God (or the Bible) can be used as a Defense and as an Offense
  - In this case, Jesus is saying, “I’m using my sword as an offense to punish those who do wrong!”

- Though we have dated the writing of Revelation at AD96, some contend that it was written before the fall of Jerusalem (AD 70).

  What if Revelation was written before John’s Gospel…?

  John 1:1-5, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In Him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”

  - Either way, John had this “revelation” that Jesus and His Words were inseparable.

  John 12:49, “For I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me to say all that I have spoken.”

  - John heard Jesus say this and he took it to heart!

- From Revelation 1:16: The sword was in Jesus’ Mouth
  - Again, reinforcing that the Jesus and the Words that He used were part of Who He was

  James 3:1-12, “Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. 2 We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check.

  3 When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. 4 Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. 5 Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. 6 The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one’s life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.
All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God’s likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? My brothers and sisters, can a fig-tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

Everything about Jesus is intentional
- These 7 letters are preparation for hearing and understanding End Time Events
- Here Jesus establishes the Power of Words:
  - His Words
  - Our Ability/Obedience to Take In His Words
  - Our eventual Submission to His Words (no more our Free Will)
  - Our Words as an overflow of His Words over us

**Commendation**

**Vs. 13, “I know where you live”**
- Sounds like a threat, but it was a point of comfort
- Nobody crave to be understood:
  - Nobody likes to be around a complainer, yet we all tend to find comfort in complaining
  - In arguments, people settle down if they feel they have been “heard” or “understood”
  - Conflict resolution 101:
    - When someone who is upset confronts you, let them rant!
      - The rant will only last for 5 minutes if you don’t retaliate
      - The first thing out of your mouth should be “I understand”
      - Now the real conversation can begin
  - There is a big difference between talking to someone who wants to be RIGHT and someone who wants the TRUTH
    - Jesus is omnipotent, and omnipresent - All-Knowing and Ever Present
      - To hear Him say, “I know” can be like soothing ointment
- Religion can make God seem far-off and disinterested
  - Testimony: Catholic funeral (even the Priest seemed uninterested)
  - We must battle past the tangible realm to see the eternal realm so we can Jesus in our situation! Hear Him say, “I know. I know where you live.”

**Vs. 13, “Where Satan has his throne” (and later in vs. 13, “where Satan lives”)**
- It is thought that the Temple of Zeus (king of the gods) was the Home of Satan
- “Throne” can also refer to a chair in a private residence; for the lord of the house
  - Satan was “at home” in Pergamum
  - Satan was in control
  - It was Satan’s territory
- The contrast to Jesus is that Satan is NOT omnipotent and NOT omnipresent
  - As much as he wants to be worshipped like God is, he will NEVER be like Him
  - Satan is confined to his created boundaries.
  - God is the Creator. Satan is the Created. No contest!

**Vs. 13, “Yet you remain true to My Name.”**
- “I know where you live...where Satan has his throne”
  - Jesus is saying, “I know how bad it is. But there is no excuse. Let NOTHING move you!”

**Vs. 13, “You did not renounce your faith in Me.”**
- You “renounce” with your Words
  - Jesus introduces Himself as the one with the Sharp, Double Edged Sword (which is in His Mouth)
  - Jesus is saying, “My Words are Sharp, let your Words be Sharp too!”
- Your Words indicate your Relationship with Jesus
  - Before Samuel knew The Word
    
    1 Samuel 3:6-8, “Again the Lord called, ‘Samuel!’ And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, ‘Here I am; you called me.’ “My son,” Eli said, “I did not call, go back and lie down.’”
  
  7 Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord: the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him.
  
  8 A third time the Lord called, ‘Samuel!’ And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, ‘Here I am; you called me.’”  

8 A third time the Lord called, ‘Samuel!’ And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, ‘Here I am; you called me.’”
- After Samuel knew The Word
  
  *1 Samuel 3:19-20, “The Lord was with Samuel as he grew up, and he let none of Samuel’s words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba recognised that Samuel was attested as a prophet of the Lord.”*

- Jesus, while in the flesh, warned us about Conflict and the Cause and Effect of our Battle:
  
  *Matthew 10:32-34, “Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven. Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.”*

**Vs. 13, “Even in the days of Antipas, My faithful witness”**

- From [www1.CBN.com](http://www1.CBN.com)
  
  The people of Pergamum worshipped a myriad of Greek and Roman gods, but when Christianity arrived with the belief in just one god, the city's pagan priests went on the attack and their most famous victim was a man named Antipas. In the book of Revelation, Jesus called Antipas "my faithful martyr." He was the bishop of Pergamum, ordained by the Apostle John, and his faith got the attention of the priests of Asklepios. He had cast out so many devils that the demons had been complaining to pagans, saying, “You’ve got to do something about this Antipas”!

  The pagan priests went to the Roman governor and complained that the prayers of Antipas were driving their spirits out of the city and hindering the worship of their gods. As punishment, the governor ordered Antipas to offer a sacrifice of wine and incense to a statue of the Roman emperor and declare that the emperor was "lord and god."

  Antipas refused.

  If you reject the divinity of the emperor, then that is the equivalent of rejecting the city of Rome, and believers were killed for this.

  Antipas was sentenced to death on the Altar of Zeus. Most of that altar still survives today, and surrounding it are some of the world's most famous marble friezes. They depict the *Gigantomachy*, or the battle between the Greek gods and the giants. At the top of the altar was a hollow bronze bull, designed for human sacrifice.

  They would take the victim (Antipas), place him inside the bull, and they would tie him in such a way that his head would go into the head of the bull. Then they would light a huge fire under the bull, and as the fire heated the bronze, the person inside of the bull would slowly begin to roast to death. As the victim would begin to moan and to cry out in pain, his cries would echo through the pipes in the head of the bull so it seemed to make the bull come alive.

  Even in the midst of the flames, the elderly bishop Antipas died praying for his church. The year was AD 92.

  A few years later, the Apostle John wrote the Book of Revelation, mentioning the death of Antipas in Pergamum. Today, all that's left there is the foundation; the Altar of Zeus is more than a thousand miles away.

  In the 19th century, German engineers dismantled the altar and took it to Berlin. The so-called "Throne of Satan" went on display in the city's Pergamon Museum in 1930, just in time to inspire one of the most brutal dictators the world has ever seen.

- Antipas’ faithful witnessing and eventual martyrdom for his unshakable faith in Christ Jesus are what earned Antipas mention in the pages of Holy Scripture, and a place in God's "Hall-Of-Fame Of Faith”.

- Satan’s work - Note the “Word of God” contrast:
  
  2 Corinthians 4:2-4, “Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to everyone’s conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

  - *distort the Word of God*; *cannot see the light of the “gospel”* - Satan’s attack is against the Word of God - Jesus comes and counters with the Sword! (The Word of God)

- And, this New Redeemed Life frustrates the world:
  
  1 Corinthians 1:18, “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”

  - Satan has blinded them

**Rebuke**

**Vs. 14, “Nevertheless, I have a few things against you”…**

- In light of terrible persecution and torture…REBUKE!

- The Measure of God is Extreme:
  
  - *James 2:10, “For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.”*

  - *Romans 3:20, “Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God’s sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin.”*
- The Sermon on the Mount sets a higher standard than the Law:

  Matthew 5:21, “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment.”

  Matthew 5:27-28, “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

  Matthew 5:29-30, “If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.”

  Matthew 5:48, “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

- Jesus was setting the stage for the Cross!

  - The ultimate need for a Savior because Humans, with a sinful, relentlessly selfish nature cannot achieve the God’s Measure of Perfection.

  - Post Salvation, however, we have ALL of the Tools to Persevere and Overcome:

    - The Holy Spirit IN us

Vs. 14, “The teachings of Balaam”

- Numbers 25:1-9 & Numbers 31:16
  - Balak, king of Moab, called Balaam, a seer (unknown origin), and asked him to curse Israel
    - Balaam refused because God told him not to
  - Balak, then tempts Balaam with money and power so Balaam tells Balak how to get the Israelites to disobey God (and get on His bad side)
  - Balak had beautiful Moabite women dance lewdly on the altars of the idol and the men of Israel committed fornication with them and worshipped the idol.
  - As a result, God’s judgment came upon them, and thousands of people died in a single day.

* Balaam didn’t directly disobey God, but led others to disobey God

Vs. 14, “Committing sexual immorality”

- Sex is a spiritual act

  Matthew 19:4-6, “Haven’t you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”

- It was meant to consummate the spiritual covenant of a man and a woman and God

  - When there is no covenant to consummate and tears and destroys the person’s spirit

  - 1 Corinthians 6:13-20, “The body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, ‘The two will become one flesh’? But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit. Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.”

- The analogy is disturbing: When a Christian has sex outside of marriage, it is like Jesus having sex with a prostitute
- Sinning against yourself!
- Christian bodies are owned by the Holy Spirit

Vs. 15, “you also have those who hold to the teachings of the Nicolaitans”

- Same as the Ephesians

  - One theory: Jewish Tradition

    - Nicolas - One of the Seven Deacons - Acts 6:5
      - The spirit of man is good and pure
      - The body of man is fundamentally, forever evil
      - The spirit is not affected by the evil of the body
      - Once the spirit is purified by belief in Jesus, there is no difference in his body even though it commits evil
      - Led to intense immorality because there was no consequence!
      - And once Sex is deemed ok with God, humans consume it

- “Our bodies sinned, not us!”
- “Vs. 15, “Likewise” - This would reinforce the teachings of Balaam
  - Balaam’s sin was leading others into sexual immorality
  - These 7 letters are to the “angels” or “messengers” or “pastors” of the church
  - If leaders stay quiet on the subject, they are sinning

**Exhortation**

**Vs. 16, “Repent therefore!”**

- The GIFT of Repentance
  - Satan wants you to keep it in the dark
  - Jesus wants you to let it out into the light!

  - Satan tells you your guilt is embarrassing
  - Jesus tells you that your confession is relieving

  - Satan wants you to make excuses
  - Jesus wants you to own it and REPENT!

- When Jesus (or the Holy Spirit) shows you your sins, He doesn’t leave you in your guilt
  - He always says, “Come”… “Repent”
  - But, fair warning…there is consequence to ignoring the conviction of the Lord…

**Vs. 16, “Otherwise, I will come to you and will fight against them”**

- A typical parent: The kids are given freedom and authority, but if they can’t resist when evil people come around, then the parent won’t just leave them to it…they go in and take care of business
  - A teenager goes to a party. The party gets out of hand…the parent rescues the child then turns to the child to rebuke and correct them!

  - “them” is referring to people IN the Church!
  - Vs. 14, “some among you who hold to the teaching of Balaam…”
  - Jesus woos the unbeliever
  - Jesus deals with the believer

**Vs. 16, “with the sword of my mouth”**

- God SPOKE everything into existence
  - He formed you with His Hands but it was out of the Dust He SPOKE into existence
  - *Proverbs 18:21, “The tongue has the power of life and death.”*
  - When Jesus speaks, It is DONE!

**Promise**

**Vs. 17, “To the one who is victorious”**

- These promises aren’t a given. Though Jesus Loves You, His Promises are only for the Overcomer

**Vs. 17, “I will give some of the hidden manna.”**

- Manna was food (bread like) that the Israelites ate while wandering 40 years in the desert
  - *Exodus 16*
    - Served by God Himself
    - To see if the Israelites could follow instructions
    - Gather enough for the day (filled with maggots if saved the next day)
    - On the 6th Day, gather enough for 2 days so no one would gather on the Sabbath

  - Manna symbolizes God’s Food:
    * John 6:32-33, “Jesus said to them, “Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. 33 For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”“*
    - Hidden Manna = Jesus = Jesus’ Words = The Sword

- Stored in Heaven: The only time it was to be “saved” or “stored” was on the 6th Day to be consumed on the 7th…The Lord’s Day…The Day of the Lord! The Day of Rest!

- “Hidden Manna”
  - Indicates: Not Common; Not Revealed Yet;
  - Perhaps our Earthly Minds cannot conceive it
- Levels of Understanding:
  
  1 Corinthians 2:10-16, “The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. 11 For who knows a person’s thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. 12 What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us. 13 This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words. 14 The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit. 15 The person with the Spirit makes judgments about all things, but such a person is not subject to merely human judgments, 16 for, ‘Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?’
  
  - Intellectual to Spiritual
  - Hidden Manna = Spiritual to Deep Spiritual
  - Also Indicates Intimacy, Relationship, Trust (Proven)
  - Whatever it is...It will be good! I want some!
    - Better than Denying Christ and Saving your Earthly Life
    - Better than Sexual Immorality

Vs. 17, “I will also give that person a white stone with a new name written on it”
  
  • In ancient Greece, jury members would cast a white stone to signify an acquittal, whereas a black stone proclaimed the defendant guilty. (Urim (white) & Thummim (black))
  
  - This was also a Jewish practice instituted by God:
    Exodus 28:30, “Also put the Urim and the Thummim in the breastpiece, so they may be over Aaron’s heart whenever he enters the presence of the Lord. Thus Aaron will always bear the means of making decisions for the Israelites over his heart before the Lord.”
    
    1 Samuel 14:41, ‘Then Saul prayed to the Lord, the God of Israel, ‘Why have you not answered your servant today? If the fault is in me or my son Jonathan, respond with Urim, but if the men of Israel are at fault, respond with Thummim.’ Jonathan and Saul were taken by lot, and the men were cleared.”
  
  - The Urim is highlighted over the Thummim:
    Numbers 27:21, “Give him some of your authority so that the whole Israelite community will obey him. 21 He is to stand before Eleazar the priest, who will obtain decisions for him by enquiring of the Urim before the Lord.”
  
  - The Urim represents Judgment (along with the Thummim)
    - The Urim represents “innocence”; “favour”
    - The Urim represents obtaining decisions (particularly God’s Heart on a matter)
    - The Urim is a glistening diamond located on the Breastplate of the Priest
      - Jesus is our High Priest; indicating our Intimate proximity with Him
    - The Urim is White: The color of Heaven and Purity
    - The word “Urim” means “light,” answering to the color white.
  
  • “New” implies something altogether renewed and heavenly (Revelation can’t reveal everything!)
    - Perhaps the “new name” is Christ’s
      compare Rev 3:12, “I will write on them the Name of my God and the Name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on them My new Name.”
      - some new revelation of Himself which shall hereafter be imparted to His people, and which they alone are capable of receiving.
  
  • The Promises are “better than” the Temptations!
    - The Supernatural “Manna” for those who deny the Natural Cravings (Sexual Immorality and all Temptations of Idols)
    - The Supernatural Priestly Urim “Stone” for those who deny the teaching of Balaam and Nicolaitan Priests
  
  Vs. 17, “known only to him who receives it.”
  
  • Just you and Jesus will know
    - This is another note of Intimacy:
      - Jesus can’t wait for the End of All Times to be with us without a Sinful Nature, Immortal, Imperishable, With His Mind and Nature!
      - Again, the motivation of the Revelation is Love
  
  Vs. 11, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”
  
  • So Pay Attention!
  • Nothing compares to Jesus! (Don’t be deceived by temptation)
    - Walk closely to Jesus