

## “8 Great Truths: Snapshots From Jesus in The Book of Revelation”

### The Church @ Pergamum - Your Allegiance Must Be To Christ Week 4 –June 27, 2010

#### *Opening Announcements and Prayer*

**Icebreaker:** What are some of the belief systems that restrain the Gospel of Christ within our city? (*List these on the board. Examples: atheist, agnostic, Islam, cults,*)

**Transition:** The church at Pergamum is in a hostile environment to living out Christian faith. It is the center of worship for false gods. The marble altar stands in the Pergamum Museum in Berlin. It was excavated by the Germans around 1900 and hauled to Berlin and assembled in a great museum. You can go online and see this altar.



#### *Read Revelation Chapter 2:12-17*

- **City Tour** - Using information from Craig Koester's web tour to provide the following information:  
<http://www2.luthersem.edu/ckoester/Revelation/main.htm>
  - Culture and Government
    - 55Mi N of Smyrna
    - 1st of the inland cities in Revelation's 7
    - Long history of loyalty to Rome since 240BC - Last King of the Pergamene Empire, Attalus III willed the city to Rome in 133BC
    - Home of Roman governor who lived in a nearly impregnable acropolis (1000ft above the city itself)
    - Governor retained the *ius gladii*, Law of the Sword -- This symbolized his power, especially over death
    - 10k seat theater
    - 2nd largest (to Alexandria) library of the Roman world, 200k volumes in scrolls and codices
    - Was in essence a microcosm of Rome
  - Commerce and industry



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### Teacher's Guide

- Trade - Astride East/West trade route
- Political center of the region
- One of the wealthiest cities in the region
- Developed parchment which was much more enduring than papyrus
- Religious practices
  - Temple of Aesculapius, god of healing
    - attached medical school or Aesculapium
    - The architecture of the pool of Bethesda suggests it may have been an Aesculapium
    - These temples were like hospitals dealing with effective herbal remedies even treating some psychosomatic illnesses
  - Temple of Zeus
  - Temple of Roma - not truly a goddess but represented the glory of Rome
  - Statue of Athena, goddess of wisdom, in the reading room of the library
- **Questions for discussion**
  - What would it have been like to live as a Christian in Pergamum?
  - What major temptations would they have faced?
  - How is Pergamum like Colorado Springs today?
- **The Letter**
  - 2:12 - Picture the author
    - One with the sharp, double-edged sword - the representative of final judgment in contrast to the Roman Governor
    - Calls them to understand they are to be citizens of an alternative reality, God's New Jerusalem reality, not Fallen Babylon's crumbling failed reality
  - 2:13 Archival image - What the church originally looked like
    - They live where Satan has his throne
      - The beast in Revelation, Satan's representative, is identified by the number 666 or 616 - (See Teacher resources note on Gematria )
        - It is "the number of a man"
        - Letters of the alphabet in Greek and Hebrew were used for numbers as they didn't have Arabic numerals
        - The emperor at the time was Nero
          - Known in the East as Neron caesar the letters of which make up the number 666
          - Known in the east as Nero Caesar the letters of which make up the number 616
      - The emperor, then, is pictured in the book as Satan the embodiment of the evil that is the Fallen Babylon empire of Rome
      - The governor sits on a throne as an extension of imperial authority in place of emperor, therefore this is the throne of Satan.
    - They remained true to his name
      - The name is more than what one is called it represents the nature of the person, in this case Jesus so we are talking about remaining true to the very nature of God.
      - They did so in the face of deadly persecution
    - Did not renounce their faith



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- They remained dedicated to the ultimate reality of who Jesus is
  - Maintained confidence in his unchangeable word
  - Antipas was a martyr most likely suffered the fate of *ius gladii*
- 2:14 - 15 - Features of a Fuzzy church
  - The teaching of Balaam enticed them to eat the meat of idols and commit sexual immorality
    - Better translations say "fornication"
    - The vast majority of meat came as leftovers from the pagan temples
    - The real issue is just as the Israelites fell into sin in Numbers 25 as a result of Balaam an unfaithful prophet in Num 22-24.
    - The image, albeit drawn from physical sins, is that of spiritual adultery as that was the true sin of the Israelites.
    - They were betraying their relationship with God by consorting with the Fallen Babylon's worldview and behaviors.
    - Maybe it was the further fear of martyrdom that frightened them into compromise and cultural accommodation
  - They accepted the teaching of the Nicolaitians
    - We don't know who they were but Jesus hated their teachings
  - Pergamum was a church with conflicted allegiances
    - ***Questions for discussion:***
      - What does it mean to hold fast to the name of Jesus for PPCC? How about for you personally?
      - Where is there fear of persecution that might tempt you to accommodate the Fallen Babylon culture around you?
      - What are today's equivalents of eating food sacrificed to idols and spiritual fornication?
- 2:16 - A call to refocus
  - Repent or I will fight against you with the sword of my mouth
    - Failure to repent will result in exposure of their spiritual adultery by the true reality that is God's word
    - When we depart from the relationship with Jesus we become unreal, like the false world of the Fallen Babylon, and are subject to judgment against the truth.
    - ***Question for discussion:***
      - What does it mean to be judged according to the Word of God?
- 2:17 - Picture the future - "To him who is conquering..."
  - Given hidden manna
    - Jewish legendary belief that manna from the Ark of the Covenant, allegedly hidden by Jeremiah when Jerusalem fell will be brought back to the Holy of Holies when the Kingdom is restored.
    - The one who represents the restored kingdom is the faithful martyr, Jesus, as compared with Antipas (Their faithful martyr) whose cleansing blood brings the restoration of the kingdom promised in Ex. 19:5 - 6 -- A kingdom of priests



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- Given white stone
  - Roman electoral procedure, a yes vote received a white stone, a no a black one, most importantly only a citizen could vote.
  - This is clearly Jesus' mark of approval and the believer's citizenship in the New Jerusalem.
- Given a new name
  - Recall that name reflects nature.
  - Jesus is giving them a new nature as citizens of the New Jerusalem that at the core only the individual and Jesus truly know.
  - We can say, "So and so is a Christian," but we can only see externally only Jesus and that person know the truth. That's why no one else knows the name.
  - ***Question for discussion:***
    - What are some of the characteristics of the New Name?
- ***Summary discussion***
  - How does allowing yourself to be drawn close to God awaken your TRUE nature, displaying the new name?
  - What does it mean & what might it cost to hold fast to Jesus' name in this Fallen Babylon world?
  - Does a Pergamum problem exist in PPCC or in you?
  - How can Pergamum's problem motivate you to give your allegiance to Jesus alone?
- **Peering Deeper**
  - How is this image of the Sword in Jesus' mouth used elsewhere in Scripture?
  - How does this image connect with the words of Hebrews 4:12 or Jesus' statements in the gospels about bringing a sword and dividing?
  - Where else in Scripture do we see spiritual relationship imagery that might help us better understand where Pergamum had faltered? (i.e. spiritual adultery, bride/bridegroom, etc.)