

A STUDY IN THE BOOK OF
REVELATION

CHAPTER 20

COMMUNITY BIBLE STUDY



7 CHURCHES IN REVELATION

Ephesus
Smyrna
Pergamum ✓
Thyatira
Sardis
Philadelphia
Laodicea



Let's Review...

	Ephesus 2:1-7	Smyrna 2:8-11	Pergamum 2:12-17
Commendation (I know your...)	Good works, labor, patience	Works, tribulation, poverty	Hold firmly to My name, did not deny My faith
Condemnation	You have left your first love	No condemnation	Hold the teaching of Balaam and Nicolaitans
Counsel	Remember from where you are fallen and repent	Fear not. Be faithful.	Repent or I will wage war
Challenge	Will give to eat of the tree of life	Will not be hurt by the second death	Will give some hidden manna and a white stone



PERGAMUM (BERGAMA)

Pergamum (Bergama)

- Pergamum is not mentioned specifically elsewhere in the Bible.
- Maybe Paul came close-by on his second missionary journey when he was in Mysia (Acts 16:7-8).
- Mentioned possibly in Acts 19:10- *“all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.”*
- Capital city of the Pergamum empire.
- 336-323 B.C.- Alexander the Great spread Greek language.
- 150 B.C.- The Pergamum alter was built.

Pergamum (Bergama)

- Many gods were worshiped in Pergamum-
- Alter to Zeus/Jupiter
(King of the gods)

(Moved to Berlin by Carl
Humann in 1878- Open to the
public in 1930) Seat of Satan?
Most popular museum in Germany
Visited by over a million people each year



Pergamum (Bergama)

- Many gods were worshiped in Pergamum-
- Temple of Dionysis/Bacchus (god of wine and revelry)



Pergamum (Bergama)

- Many gods were worshiped in Pergamum-
- Temple of Athena/Minerva (goddess of war/wisdom)

Oldest temple on
The acropolis



Pergamum (Bergama)



- Many gods were worshiped in Pergamum-
- Trajan's temple
(Imperial cult- Augustus was the first emperor to call himself a god, Julius Caesar's great nephew)



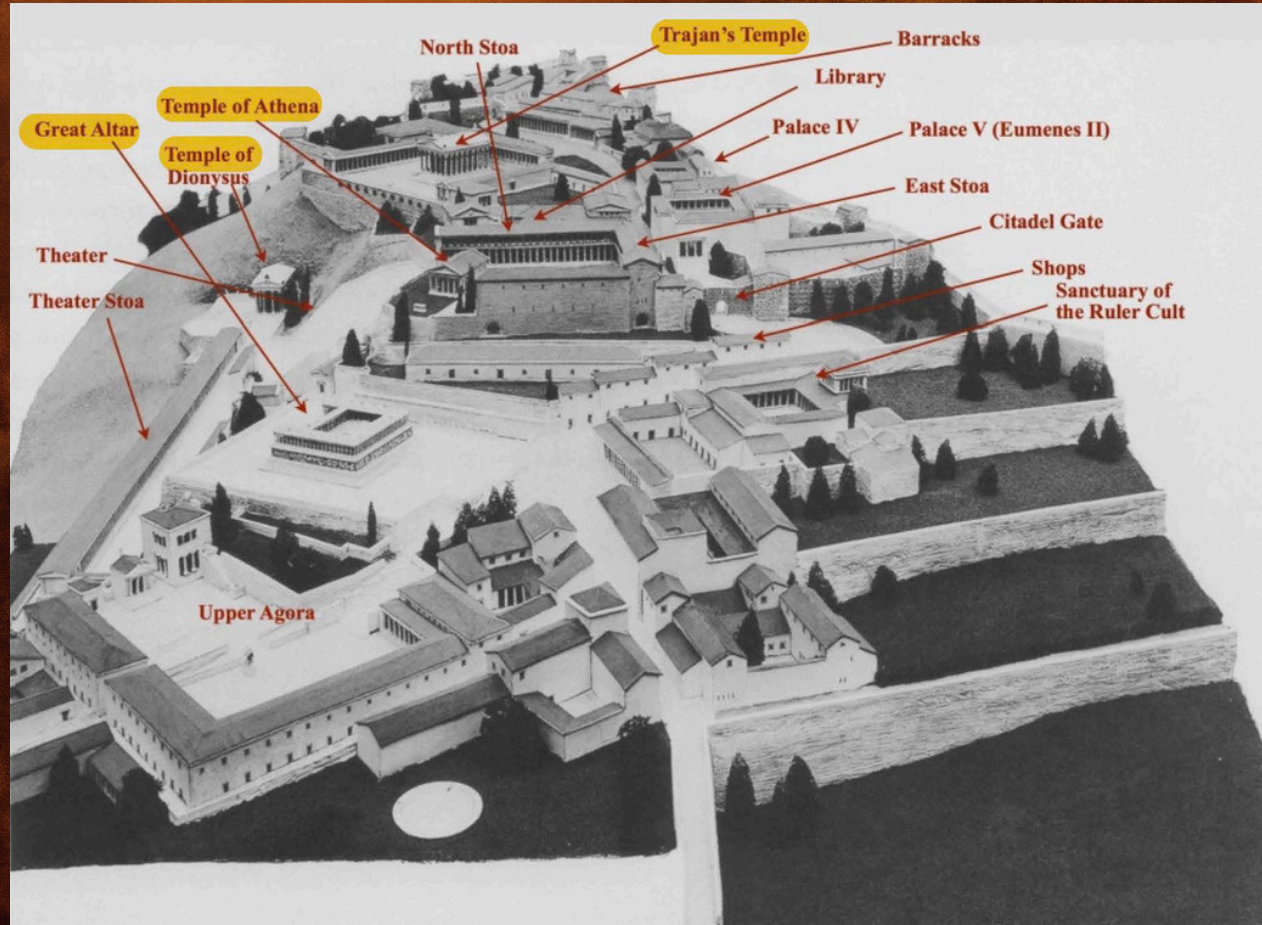
Pergamum (Bergama)

- All four temples
Were on the
Pergamum Acropolis

acro – summit

polis – city

1300 feet above rest
of the city
("City at the top")



Pergamum (Bergama)

- Sanctuary of Demeter/Ceres
(goddess of grain/harvest)- She provides daily bread



Pergamum (Bergama)

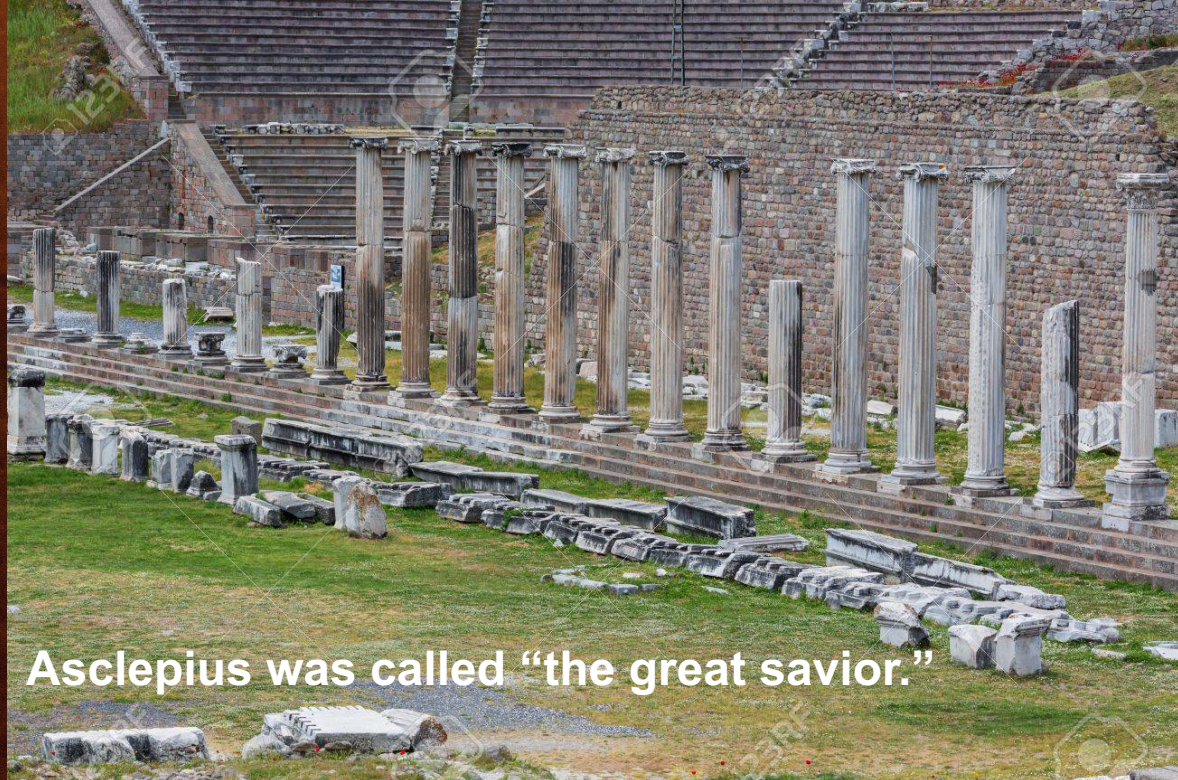
- Temple to Asclepius (god of medicine)
Snake (rebirth) was his symbol



The Rod of Asclepius



The Staff of Hermes



Asclepius was called “the great savior.”

Verse 12- *“And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write:
The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this:*

Sharp two-edged sword- we saw this in John’s initial vision of the Lord (1:16).

Provincial governors held the “power of the sword” (*ius gladii*), but Jesus will fight his enemies with a more powerful sword (v. 16, 19:15, 21)- His word.



Rhomphaia

The severe damage inflicted by this weapon on the Roman legionnaires forced them to make modifications to their armor, including the addition reinforcing bands across their helmets, extra shoulder and waist armor, greaves and armor for the sword arm.

Known for its cutting power. The one described in verse 16 is double-edged as it is able to discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart (cf. Heb. 4:12)

Verse 13- 'I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold firmly to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

Satan's throne- at least four possibilities:

1. Pergamum was a center of pagan religion. The acropolis had the appearance of a throne.
2. The altar of Zeus Sōtēr seemed to be a throne.
3. Asclepius Sōtēr was identified with the serpent.
4. Pergamum was the center of emperor worship.

Verse 13- *'I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold firmly to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.*

The word "throne" (*thronos*) appears forty-two times in Revelation: forty refer to God's throne and two to the throne of Satan and the beast (2:13; 16:10). God is in control!

Believers identified with the Lord even though under great civic and religious pressure.

Verse 13- *'I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold firmly to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.*

My witness- (martus)- By the 3rd century, *martus* was translated "martyr" instead of "witness" because so many faithful witnesses for Christ were killed for their faith. Jesus gives Antipas His own title (Revelation 1:5; 3:14)- a faithful witness.

Verse 13- 'I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold firmly to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

Just as in Smyrna, persecution often resulted in death, as with Antipas, possibly the first pastor of the Pergamum church. Church tradition says that he was roasted alive in a brazen bull for his faith.



**A depiction of the
brazen bull in the
Torture Museum in
Bruges, Belgium.**

When Antipas was
advised:

***"Antipas, the whole
world is against
you!,"***

Antipas reputedly
replied:

***"Then I am against
the whole world!"***

Verse 14- But I have a few things against you, because you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit sexual immorality.

Some members lacked resistance to false teaching and immoral conduct within the congregation. They didn't expel the followers of Balaam (Numbers 22-25) as the believers in Ephesus did.

Balaam instructed the Moabite women to act immorally with the men of Israel so they would worship their false gods.

Verse 14- *But I have a few things against you, because you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit sexual immorality.*

stumbling block- (skandalon)- a snare. Just as Balaam taught Balak to snare the men of Israel with Moabite women, so these who have infiltrated the church are trying to snare believers through three practices (Numbers 25:1-3):

- Sexual immorality
- Eating food sacrificed to idols
- Worshiping idols

Verse 15- So you too, have some who in the same way hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

Again, Jesus mentions the Nicolaitans (v. 6). Some scholars believe the Nicolaitans and the followers of Balaam are the same (swallowing/conquering the people).

Just as Balaam tried to deceive and defeat Israel with a deceptive and immoral lifestyle, the Nicolaitans/followers of Balaam tried to deceive and defeat the church of Jesus.

Believers were tolerating those who compromised.

Verse 16- Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will wage war against them with the sword of My mouth.

The Nicolaitans were teaching a false doctrine of grace.

Do whatever you want with your flesh because only the spirit matters.

Romans 6:1-2 – What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? God forbid! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?

Verse 16- Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will wage war against them with the sword of My mouth.

repent- occurs 12 times in Revelation, eight times as Jesus addresses the churches in Ephesus, Pergamum, Sardis, and Laodicea and four times in the past tense to unbelievers who refused to do so.

I am coming to you quickly- I am already on My way. He will wage war with the weapon of His words against those who are trying to harm the church.

Verse 17- The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows except the one who receives it.'

The one who overcomes- those who believe and follow Jesus.

hidden manna- God instructed Moses to place a jar of manna (מַן “what is it?”) in the ark of the covenant (an *omer* is a little over 2 liters) after they crossed into the Promised Land (Exodus 16:32-34) to help them remember God was their provider.

Verse 17- The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows except the one who receives it.'

Jews are looking for the coming of the messianic age when they will eat the hidden manna.

Christians know that Jesus is the **daily** Bread of Life- we eat His hidden manna every day. Israel could only collect manna for one day (two days before the Sabbath) or it would rot.

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white stone- At least 5 of many theories:

- White stones were cast in courts of justice to signify exoneration of the accused and black stones to condemn him

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- The breastplate of the high priest had twelve stones, each of which had the name of a tribe written on it (Exod. 28:21). Similarly, a white stone with the name of the individual believer written on it is always in God's presence.
- The Urim and Thummim- (lights and perfection) casting of lots to discern God's will- White- yes? Black- no?

Verse 17- The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows except the one who receives it.'

- White stone to permit one to a banquet (person's name engraved)
- White stone with victor's name engraved as an athletic "medal"

no one knows- individual name or name given to all believers?

Two Views of Gender Roles in the Church

Egalitarian - The position that there are no biblical gender-based restrictions on ministry in the church.

Galatians 3:28 - *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

Two Views of Gender Roles in the Church

Complementarian - The position that God intends for only men to serve in formal church leadership roles. They should be the only ones who teach, assume authority over men (1 Timothy 2:12) and should also be the only ones who are pastors/elders/bishops (1 Timothy 3:2), and deacons (1 Timothy 3:12).

Paul calls women in the church “fellow-workers” to serve in equally important, but complementary roles (Philippians 4:2-3).

Two Views of Gender Roles in the Church

1 Timothy 2:12- *But I do not allow a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.*

1 Timothy 3:2- *An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, skillful in teaching...*

1 Timothy 3:12- *Deacons must be husbands of one wife, and good managers of their children and their own households.*

Philippians 4:2-3- *I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord. Indeed, true companion, I ask you also, help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement as well as the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.*

Next week...

- Continue Chapter 2- The Message to Thyatira

