

JUNE 21, 2020

REVELATION 2:12-17 (NASB)

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

¹³ ‘I know where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is; and you hold fast 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. ¹⁴ But I have a few things against you, because you have there some 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 *acts of immorality*. ¹⁵ So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. ¹⁶ Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth. ¹⁷ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him, 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 but he who receives it.’

STUDY IT

- How is Jesus uniquely identified to the church of Pergamum? (v.12)
- What does a sharp two-edge sword reveal about Jesus’ commitment to defend/attack those in opposition? (vs.2:12, 16 & 19:15)
- Pergamum was known as a center of the imperial cult, meaning temples and priests devoted to the worship of Caesar. How might this context shed light on the image of Satan’s throne? What temptations and persecutions might be unique to such a city? (v.13)
- How does Jesus commend the believers? (v.13)
- What is the problem with the “teaching of Balaam?” (v.14) Why might God use stories from Israel’s past to rebuke the church?
- How will Jesus bring correction to the false teachings? (v.16)
- What are the three blessings promised to the overcomers? (v.17)
- How does God seem to use rewards to encourage his faithful children? (v.17)

APPLY IT

- What seat of power/throne might be present in you? In our church? In our community?
- Think of a time you made a conscious choice to turn away from sin and back to God (aka “repent”). What was that experience like? Was it difficult or easy? Were you drawn back into that sin?
- How has Jesus helped you overcome sin?
- What reward has Jesus offered that encouraged you to remain steadfast and faithful?

WORDLIST

Here are some highlighted definitions from this week’s passage:

Satan/The Satan – A spiritual being or force that seeks to supplant God’s glory for his own. Jesus refers to Satan as the demonic ruler of the world (for now). (John 12:31-32; 14:30). See also Genesis 3, Isaiah 14:12-14, Ezekiel 28:12-19. In Rev 12:1-9, God defeats Satan forever.

Satan’s throne – A powerful opposer to the Church is centered in Pergamum in the form of the idolatrous imperial cult of Rome, along with many other temples devoted to the gods.

Balaam – a for-hire prophet to curse Israel. (Numbers 22-24) Balaam represents a doctrine of moral compromise, which reduces the glory of God in the life of an individual. (Jude 1:11)

Nicolaitans – Similar to Balaam, this is likely a teaching or doctrine that celebrates permissiveness, which is a lifestyle of excess and hedonism and disregards the seriousness of sin. (See Jude 1:4)

Hidden manna – This was a possible reference to the ark of the covenant and its contents. It could also be symbolic of heaven’s sustenance, that is, a reward of God’s goodness and provision. (see Jeremiah 15:16)

The white stone and a new name – Both possibly refer to the Roman version of a “ticket” for entrance into an event or celebration. Such stones (with names) were often used to reward athletic champions, or demonstrate a “not guilty” verdict in a trial.