

PERGAMOS

Int.

1. Aim: To show the historical background of the city, expound the letter and point out some lessons that apply to us!
2. 7 churches of Asia - Rev. 2 & 3 - Ephesus, Smyrna, PERGAMOS [Pergamum]
3. Background of City.
 - a. After the death of Alexander the Great his kingdom broke up and Pergamos became the capitol of Mysia
 - i. It was a powerful and wealthy kingdom
 - ii. It was independent
 - b. They had a large library with over 20,000 volumes
 - i. Only the library at Alexandria, Egypt was larger
 - ii. The ruler of Pergamos tried to bribe the librarian of Alexandria to come there and make their library the best in the world
 - iii. The ruler of Egypt got mad and cut off the supply of Papyrus to Pergamos.
 - iv. They invented a new writing material made from animal skins. The Latin term for the paper of Pergamos was called "parchment", which was a better more durable material. Years later Mark Antony gave the library at Pergamos to Cleopatra.
 - c. Huge Medical Complex
 - i. The god of medicine was - Aesculapius -
 - ii. People from all over Europe and Asia were treated here
 - iii. Aesculapius was pictured as carrying a staff with a serpent wrapped around it. The serpent was a symbol of health because it could shed its skin and appear young again. 2 snakes = caduceus [Greek god = Hermes]

- iv. Galen - one of the famous physicians was born in Pergamos
- v. The Staff and serpent is the insignia used in modern medicine to represent healing
- vi. To the 1st century Christians in Pergamos this represented the worship of the serpent, or Satan, which was a form of paganism.

d. Idol Worship

- i. Zeus - chief of gods - temple Dionyus - god of wine
- ii. Athena - goddess of maidens
- iii. Emperor worship- temple for goddess of Rome - each year required to burn a pinch of incense upon altar and say: "Caesar is Lord"

4. Church - there is no record of its beginning - the only mention of the town in the Bible

5. Bergama

- a. Present town located near this spot
- b. Not a very prosperous growing city today
- c. The Moslem religion is the only religion tolerated in that region!

Discussion

I. INTRODUCTION OF SPEAKER

A. Text: "And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write: these things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges." v. 12

B. Two Edges

- 1. Eph. 6:17 Heb.4:12
- 2. Being sharp it penetrates the smallest opening, pricks the heart, lays bare the secrets of the heart and life
- 3. Being two-edged, it cuts two ways First convicts man of sin and Second it also convicts of righteousness

4. Converts some and condemns some; saves all who accept it and slays all who reject it.
- C. Sharp = indicates the penetrating power of Christ's words
1. His words would not only comfort and instruct the saints,
 2. But would also terrify and destroy the ungodly
- D. Two edges = represents the thoroughness of its work
- E. The reason he uses such words is seen after we see the faults of some in this church

II. WORDS OF PRAISE

- A. "I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth." v.13
- B. Their environment was not very good
1. He knew they dwelled in Satan's seat
 - a. Bad Environment
 - b. Satan incited the people to such awful crimes that the place seemed to be his own personal abode.
 - c. This city had all the evils that go with a city filled with idolatrous worship
 - d. There was a seducing power in that city enticing unstable souls into pagan worship with its immoral rites. It was also a persecuting power. When pagans failed to seduce a Christian, they made life very unpleasant for him.

2. Yet they held fast they remained a Christian in spite of the bad environment in which they lived
 - a. We don't have to be like those around us
 - b. These were faithful even in Satan's headquarters
 - c. They did not deny the faith!
- C. They held fast even when Antipas was martyred
1. We don't know anything else about him except what is mentioned here.
 2. He was given as an example of the loyalty of these Christians. Rather than worship an idol, he gave up his lie. According to a legendary story, he was shut up in a brazen bull, and ended his life in thanksgiving and prayer.
- D. Nero was of Satan
1. On special occasions he lighted up the royal gardens with the flames of burning Christian martyrs
 2. He murdered his own mother, and his wife
 3. He set fire to the city of Rome and charged the crime to the Christians
 4. Yet it is declared that there were Christians in the very household of Nero who were faithful.

III. WORDS OF CONDEMNATION 14&15

- A. "But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication." v. 14
- B. The doctrine of Balaam
1. Num. 21-25 31:16 These verses tell us how Balaam had not been allowed to curse Israel as Balak had requested, but later because of his love for money [the hire of wrong doing II Pet. 2:15], he taught the people to sin through fornication and the eating of meats offered to idols.
 2. Balaam had taught that such things were not sinful so he could receive a reward from Balak.
 3. Therefore there must have been some in Pergamos who were advising and teaching the Christians to participate in certain sins telling them that there was nothing wrong with it.
 4. This false teaching was a stumbling block which caused the people to fall into sin.
- C. "SO HAST THOU ALSO THEM THAT HOLD THE DOCTRINE OF THE NICOLAITANS, WHICH THING I HATE." V. 15
1. The church at Ephesus hated the works of the Nicolaitans, while these people held to it.
 2. Some believe that the Nicolaitans held fornication and the eating of idol sacrifices to be things indifferent, and therefore permitted.
 3. Whatever they practiced we know Christ hated it and we must hate it also if we are to be Christians.

- D. Christ condemns them for all of their evil practices which will cause them to be lost. He does not overlook any sin. They must be forgiven and must not continue in them.

IV. WARNING [or counsel & advice]

- A. "Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth." V. 16
- B. He gives them two choices:
1. Repent = change conduct
 2. Or He will come against them quickly with the sword of His mouth
- C. Repent
1. They had some in the church who were practicing sinful things.
 2. The others were tolerating such actions
 3. He told them to change their conduct - repent
 - a. The active sinner must repent
 - b. Those who sinned by allowing such to continue
- D. Or else be found in the wrath of God - "will fight against them"
1. Christ would authorize punishment for the guilty
 2. Just how this would be done is not stated, but presumably some natural means at hand would be used or allowed to do the work.
- E. "With the sword of my mouth"
1. The word Christ speaks
 2. This word of Christ is either a comfort and strength to us or else it destroys us.

V. PROMISE

- A. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the spirit saith unto the churches; to him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." v.

17

- B. He that hath an ear
1. He has used this in the other letters
 2. In order for us to hear what the spirit says we must have an ear for it. We must want to listen before we can hear.
- C. The promised REWARDS for overcoming
1. Hidden Manna
 - a. The satisfaction of every spiritual need.
 - b. The children of Israel were on a journey through a desert land to the land of Promise. The manna from heaven kept them alive even in the wilderness
 - c. We are on a journey through life with trials and temptations. Jesus is the "Hidden" or unseen influence that sustains every Christian on the way to that land beyond the river.
 - d. The Lord will provide the spiritual needs of his faithful ones
 - (1) Rom. 8:28
 - (2) "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Rm. 8:31b
 - e. God will be able to satisfy our spiritual needs just as bread will satisfy our physical needs.

2. White Stone

- a. Pergamos engaged in the mining of white stone for use as a commercial product.
- b. Perhaps it referred to one of the following:
 - (1) The white stone was given to a man who had been tried and justly acquitted. He carried it as a sign that he was free of the charge of the crime which had been placed against him.
 - (2) The white stone was given to a man who was freed from slavery and made a citizen of the province. He carried the stone as an indication of his citizenship.
 - (3) The white stone was given to the winner of a race or contest as an indication that he had overcome opposition.
 - (4) The white stone was given to a warrior returning from battle with victory over the enemy

3. A new Name

- a. A new name indicates an advancement in life
 - (1) Abram = Abraham
 - (2) Jacob = Israel
- b. Perhaps it refers to a more intimate relationship with the Father or God
- c. No one will know except he that receiveth the new name so it is our task to overcome and the white stone with the new name we can leave to God to make plain.

CONCLUSION --- Lessons We can Learn

1. We can live the true life in any locality, even in Satan's seat
 - a. These at Pergamos held fast in Satan's seat
 - b. Even when a brother in Christ was martyred they held fast
 - c. Some Christians today can become offended over a small matter and deny the faith
 - d. Some Christians see the frailties and weaknesses in other Christians and will sometimes deny the faith
 - e. Sometimes church problems will cause others to deny the faith
 - f. Hold Fast - be steadfast - I Cor. 15:58
2. Love the sinner and hate his sin
 - a. We must never go along with his sins
 - b. We must not overlook their sins and let them live in error
 - c. We cannot compromise with sin - They were holding fast against Satan, but yet they were allowing false doctrine to take root
 - d. We must not be afraid to "rock the boat" when error is creeping into a congregation. Often the excuse is used "it will work itself out" to do nothing when error and false doctrine is evident!
3. The promises of God are not pledged to the Christian that is overcome, but to the Christians that overcome!
4. We must not cause others to sin
 - a. Cast a stumblingblock before them
 - b. Tell them it is all right to do certain things which we know are wrong
 - c. Teaching others how to cause the weak to sin is wrong!
5. The Letter to Pergamos

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