



## Rev 2:12-17 – PERGAMOS, CHURCH OF COMPROMISE



### Pergamos:

- Called “the greatest city in Asia Minor,” Pergamos had the first temple dedicated to Caesar and was a rabid promoter of the imperial cult. <sup>1</sup>
  - Ramsay (Op. cit., p. 281) calls it “the royal city, the city of authority.” Eumenes II (b.c. 197–159) extended it and embellished it with many great buildings, including a library with 200,000 volumes, second only to Alexandria. The Kingdom of Pergamum became a Roman province b.c. 130. Pliny termed it the most illustrious city of Asia. Parchment (χαρτα Περγάμενα [charta Pergamena]) derived its name from Pergamum. <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 573.

<sup>2</sup> A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933), Re 2:12.

- The Greek prefix **per**, seen in words like “pervert,” means opposition. The suffix **gamos**, seen in words like “monogamy” or “bigamy,” means “marriage.” **Pergamos, then, means “objectionable marriage”**.<sup>3</sup>
- Like Ephesus and Smyrna it was a wealthy city, but it was wicked. **People in its pagan cults worshiped Athena, Asclepius, Dionysus, and Zeus**.<sup>4</sup>
  - The city also had a temple dedicated to **Aesculapius, the god of healing**, whose insignia was the entwined serpent on the staff. (This is still a medical symbol today.).<sup>5</sup>
- **Pergamos had become probably the greatest center of pagan religion in the world at that time**. In fact, **Alexander Hislop**, in his famous book **Two Babylons**, gave much documentation to show that Pergamos had inherited the religious mantle of ancient Babylon when Babylon fell in the days of Belshazzar. The priests, who had kept the secrets of the ancient mystery religions centered at Babylon ever since the days of Nimrod, were forced to migrate at that time, transferring what amounted to the headquarters of Satan’s religious system away from Babylon north and west to Pergamos where it endured for several centuries in that great center of evolutionary pantheistic paganism. Still later it moved to Rome.<sup>6</sup>

### Temple of Zeus

- The great altar of Zeus, one of the Seven Wonders of the World, was located here—the largest altar in the world.<sup>7</sup>



<sup>3</sup> Jon Courson, *Jon Courson’s Application Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2003), 1673.

<sup>4</sup> John F. Walvoord, “Revelation,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 935–936.

<sup>5</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 573.

<sup>6</sup> Henry M. Morris, *The Revelation Record: A Scientific and Devotional Commentary on the Prophetic Book of the End Times* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 1983), 57.

<sup>7</sup> Henry M. Morris, *The Revelation Record: A Scientific and Devotional Commentary on the Prophetic Book of the End Times* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 1983), 57.

**12** "And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, 'These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword:

They should anticipate a judgement from Christ

**1 Peter 4:17–18**

**17** For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?

**18** Now "If the righteous one is scarcely saved, Where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

Jesus demands righteous living!

**Revelation 1:16** He had in His right hand seven stars, **out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword,** and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.

**Revelation 19:15** **Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations.** And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

**Revelation 19:21** **And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse.** And all the birds were filled with their flesh.

**Hebrews 4:12–13**

**12** **For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword,** piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

**13** And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

- The 2-edged sword:
  - The Word of God
  - The sword of cleansing / the sword of healing
  - The sword of God's surgery / the pruning hook. **Heb 4:12-13**
  - The sword of the Spirit of God **Eph 6.10-20**
  - The sword of salvation / the sword of death

**13** "I know your works,  
and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is.  
And you hold fast to My Name,  
and did not deny My faith even in the days in which **Antipas was My faithful martyr**, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

- 3 Things they are commended for:
  - Works
  - Hold fast to My Name
  - Did not deny My faith
- "Where you dwell":
  - God knows exactly where we are, every second.

**Psalm 139:1-10**

For the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

**1** O LORD, You have searched me and known me.

**2** You know my sitting down and my rising up;  
You understand my thought afar off.

**3** You comprehend my path and my lying down,  
And are acquainted with all my ways.

**4** For there is not a word on my tongue,  
But behold, O LORD, You know it altogether.

**5** You have hedged me behind and before,  
And laid Your hand upon me.

**6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;  
It is high, I cannot attain it.**

**7** Where can I go from Your Spirit?  
Or where can I flee from Your presence?

**8** If I ascend into heaven, You are there;  
If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there.

**9** If I take the wings of the morning,  
And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,

**10** Even there Your hand shall lead me,  
And Your right hand shall hold me.

**Bishop Antipas** was murdered by the Romans for refusing to worship a statue of the Emperor. He was sacrificed inside a bronze bull on the altar at the Temple of Zeus. <sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> <http://ccofct.blogspot.com/2015/11/message-to-church-at-pergamos.html>



## Brazen Bull

- The brazen bull, or Sicilian bull, was a torture and execution device designed in ancient Greece during the 6th century BC. Perillos of Athens invented and proposed it to Phalaris, the tyrant of Akragas, Sicily, as a new means of executing criminals.
- A solid piece of brass was cast with a door on the side that could be opened and latched. The victim would be placed inside the bull and a fire set underneath it until the metal became literally yellow as it was heated. The victim would then be slowly roasted to death, all the while screaming in agonizing pain. The bull was purposely designed to amplify these screams and make them sound like the bellowing of a bull. When the bull was reopened, the victim's scorched bones shone like jewels and were made into bracelets.
- The Romans were also reputed to have used this torture device to kill some Christians, notably Saint Eustace, who, according to Christian tradition, was roasted in a brazen bull with his wife and children by Emperor Hadrian. **The same happened to Saint Antipas, Bishop of Pergamon during the persecutions of Emperor Domitian.** <sup>9</sup>

## Deny My faith:

### **Matthew 10:32–33**

**32** "Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven.

**33 But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.**

<sup>9</sup> <http://trove42.com/brazen-bull-impalement-torture/>

- Here, God denies us before His Angels:

**Luke 12:8–9**

**8** “Also I say to you, whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God.

**9** But he who denies Me before men **will be denied before the angels of God.**

**2 Timothy 2:12–13**

**12** If we endure,  
We shall also reign with Him.

**If we deny Him,  
He also will deny us.**

**13** If we are faithless,  
He remains faithful;  
He cannot deny Himself.

**2 Peter 2:1** But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, **even denying the Lord who bought them,** and bring on themselves swift destruction.

**720. ἀρνέομαι *arnéomai*; contracted *arnoúmai*, fut. *arnēsomai*, deponent. **To deny.****

(I) To deny, refuse (Heb. 11:24).

(II) Related to previous meaning with the acc. of person, **to refuse someone, not to know or recognize him, to reject him either in the face of a former relationship or better knowledge.** To deny, decline, reject, give up (Matt. 10:33; 2 Tim. 2:12, 13, to renounce one’s own character, to be inconsistent with oneself; 1 John 2:22, 23, denying God to be the Father of Christ and Christ to be the Son of God). It can include the idea of falsehood or contradiction, not only with reference to the obj. but on the part of the subj. against himself (Matt. 10:33; Luke 12:9; 22:57, denying that he had any connection with him; Acts 3:13, 14; 7:35; 2 Pet. 2:1; 1 John 2:22; Jude 1:4).

(III) As used with something as its obj., to reject anything, retract, renounce, deny, disown depending on the context (1 Tim. 5:8; 2 Tim. 3:5; Titus 1:16, **to deny by actions that there is a God;** Titus 2:12; Rev. 2:13; 3:8). Used in an absolute sense in 2 Tim. 2:12.

(IV) To gainsay without further specification of the obj. (Luke 8:45; John 1:20; Acts 4:16; Titus 1:16). Falsely to deny, disown (Matt. 26:70, 72; Mark 14:68, 70; John 18:25, 27). **Opposite of *homologéō*** (3670), to confess or say together (Matt. 10:33; John 1:20; Titus 1:16).

**How will the Lord Jesus deny believers? In Matt. 10:33, “him will I also deny [*arnēsomai*, the fut. indic. of *arnéomai*] before my Father which is in heaven.” This may refer to the rewards of the believers, since the word here does not necessarily mean an utter denial as the case will be in the day of judgment for those who acted as would-be Christian miracle workers. To these the Lord will say, “I never knew you” (Matt. 7:21–23).** In Matt. 10:33, however, we find the believers before the Father who is in heaven being recognized for their consistency and fidelity in witnessing while on earth. The teaching here is that the recognition in heaven will be proportionate to the confession (*homología* [3671], acknowledgment or witnessing) on earth.

A similar statement is found in **Luke 12:8**, and then in verse nine we read, “But he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God.” **The first verb “denieth” is *arnēsámenos*, the aor. part. of *arnéomai*, which should literally translate “he who did deny me” (a.t.).** The aor. is constative and possibly has in view any single moment in one’s lifetime (although we cannot be dogmatic because the constative could also be considering the entirety of one’s lifespan). Here the word *arnéomai* stands in contrast to *homologéō* (3670), to acknowledge, witness, confess, which verb in verse eight is also in the subjunctive aor. which refers to acts of the acknowledgment of Jesus Christ before men. **The second time the verb is used in regard to the Son of man, it is *homologései*, which is the fut. indic. and which again refers to the occasion of the acknowledgment by Christ of those times in which the believer confessed Him before men.** In verses eight and nine this acknowledgment by the Lord Jesus Christ of the confessing or the denying believer is said to be made before the angels of God. This is in heaven for only there are the angels of God. It is difficult to imagine that these angels and the believers would be found in the eternal fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels (Matt. 25:41). **The angels referred to in Luke 12:8, 9 are God’s unfallen angels, while in Matt. 25:41 reference is made to the devil’s messengers, those angels who became demons because of their disobedience to God (Is. 14:12–15; Job 4:18; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 1:6; Rev. 12:9).** In Luke 12:9 the verb used in regard to the denial is not *arnéomai* but the comp. *aparnēthēsetai*, the fut. pass. of *aparnéomai* (533), which could be taken as meaning that the denial by the Lord Jesus Christ, the *apárnēsis*, is in direct proportion to the *árnēsis*, man’s denial.

**In 2 Tim. 2:12 we have another occurrence of the denial by Jesus Christ in the future: “if we deny him, he also will deny us.”** The verb “deny” in Gr. is *arnēsómetha*, which is the fut. indic. with punctiliar meaning, again perhaps referring to occasions of refusing to confess Jesus Christ. **In the proportion that we refuse to confess Him, He will also deny (*arnēsetai*) us, again in the fut. indic. which refers to occasions of not confessing before His Father and His angels as indicated in Matt. 10:33; Luke 12:9.** The expression in 2 Tim. 2:13 “he cannot deny himself” has the verb *arnēsasthai*, the aor. inf. This again refers to occasions of denying Himself, meaning not to live up to His character of justice of reward proportionate to our witnessing for Him on earth. At no time will the Lord show Himself inconsistent in His judgment of our works, i.e., confessing Jesus Christ before men as well as our lack of such confession which is denying Him. **It is indeed noteworthy that in 1 John 2:22, 23 the verb is in the pres. part. three times, *arnoúmenos*, which indicates a life of continuous denial that Jesus is the Christ and the Son of the Father. He who constantly denies the Lord Jesus Christ cannot be a believer. He is called an antichrist. The same is true in Jude 1:4 where the word “denying” is again *arnoúmenoi*, constantly denying. These, of course, are called ungodly men, worthy of condemnation.**

**Deriv.:** *aparnéomai* (533), to deny.

**Syn.:** *antitássomai* (498), to place oneself against, oppose, resist; *aporriptō* (641), to hurl off, reject; *aposteréō* (650), to despoil, keep back; *periphronéō* (4065), to despise, depreciate; *apōthéomai* (683), to reject, push away; *apotrépō* (665), to deflect, avoid, turn away; *apophérō* (667), to bear off, carry away; *aparnéomai* (533), to deny completely; *apotássomai* (657), to renounce; *paraitéomai* (3868), to avoid, reject; *apodokimázō* (593), to disapprove; *athetéō* (114), to break faith with, reject; *ekptúō* (1609), to spit out.

**Ant.:** ***homologéō* (3670), to confess, witness, say in agreement with;** *prosdéchomai* (4327), to accept; *paréchō* (3930), to present, to bring; *sunairō* (4868), to reckon, agree together; *egkrínō* (1469), to judge in, count among; *apodéchomai* (588), to take fully, welcome, approve; *euarestéomai* (2100), to be pleased, gratified entirely; *eudokéō* (2106), to approve, think well of, be pleased; *paradéchomai* (3858), to admit, delight in, receive; *anagnōrízō* (319), to recognize. 10

**14** But I have a few things against you, because you have **there** those who hold the doctrine of **Balaam**, who taught **Balak** to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality.

**15** Thus you also have those who hold **the doctrine of the Nicolaitans**,

<sup>10</sup> Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

which thing I hate.

- **There** (ἐκεῖ [ekei]). That is παρ' ὑμῖν [par' humin] (among you). **A party in the church that resisted emperor-worship, to the death in the case of Antipas, yet were caught in the insidious wiles of the Nicolaitans which the church in Ephesus withstood.** <sup>11</sup>

#### 4 things Pergamos is Condemned for by Jesus:

1. Congregation members that believe in the doctrines of Balaam. (Num. 25:1–9).
2. Some who eat things previously sacrificed to idols
3. Some committing sexual immorality
4. Some who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans.

**It seems the Pastor was knowingly allowing these various false doctrines to remain in his church.**

- **Ephesus** did not allow these doctrines – to their credit before Jesus
- **Smyrna** did not allow these doctrines – to their credit before Jesus
  - The doctrine of Balaam (who, like the Nicolaitanes, had also been a false prophet) was to gain control over God's people by seducing them to compromise with the world, especially in sexual sins (Numbers 31:15, 16; Jude 11; 2 Peter 2:15). <sup>12</sup>

**Jude 11** Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, **have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit,** and perished in the rebellion of Korah.

#### 2 Peter 2:12–17

**12** But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption,

**13** and will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you,

**14** having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children.

**15** They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, **following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;**

<sup>11</sup> A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933), Re 2:14.

<sup>12</sup> Henry M. Morris, *The Revelation Record: A Scientific and Devotional Commentary on the Prophetic Book of the End Times* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 1983), 58.

**16** but he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet.

**17** These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.

- **Poor oversight of the church?**

- Pastor encouraged such activities?
- Elders knew what was going on and did nothing about it?
- Pastor out of touch with even a small congregation?
  - Profession, not a calling?

- **COMPROMISE!**

- This spirit of compromise has surely been one of the greatest evils in the Christian church ever since the days of the church at Pergamos. <sup>13</sup>

### Christ Jesus makes it clear:

- He hates their deeds. (Rev 2:6)
- He hates their doctrines. (Rev 2:14-15)

**16 Repent, or else** I will come to you quickly and will fight against **them** with the sword of My mouth.

- Jesus will fight against those that hold the doctrine of Balaam and the Nicolaitans.
  - "With the sword of My mouth":
    - The Scalpel

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

- **a new.** Gr. *kainos*, **new in quality, not in time**; unfailing freshness, the like of which has never existed before <sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Henry M. Morris, *The Revelation Record: A Scientific and Devotional Commentary on the Prophetic Book of the End Times* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 1983), 58.

<sup>14</sup> Jerome H. Smith, *The New Treasury of Scripture Knowledge: The Most Complete Listing of Cross References Available Anywhere—Every Verse, Every Theme, Every Important Word* (Nashville TN: Thomas Nelson, 1992), 1506.

## The “hidden Manna”

- Manna from Moses was hidden in a golden container within the Ark of the Covenant.

**Exodus 16:33** And Moses said to Aaron, “Take a pot and put an omer of manna in it, and lay it up before the LORD, to be kept for your generations.”

- Jesus is the living Manna that came from heaven

**John 6:51** I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.”

- Some say Jeremiah hid the Ark when Nebuchadnezzar was imminent

### **2 Mac 2:5–8. (NRSV)**

**5** Jeremiah came and found a cave-dwelling, and he brought there the tent and the ark and the altar of incense; then he sealed up the entrance. **6** Some of those who followed him came up intending to mark the way, but could not find it. **7** When Jeremiah learned of it, he rebuked them and declared: “The place shall remain unknown until God gathers his people together again and shows his mercy. **8** Then the Lord will disclose these things, and the glory of the Lord and the cloud will appear, as they were shown in the case of Moses, and as Solomon asked that the place should be specially consecrated.”<sup>15</sup>

## This promise is important for those that do not deny Him

- Continued access
- A white stone – unknown meaning but very unique to perseverant overcomers
- A new name that is intimate and unique between us and Jesus

## Possible theory:

- The ancient Roman custom of awarding white stones to the victors of athletic games. The winner of a contest was awarded a white stone with his name inscribed on it. This served as his “ticket” to a special awards

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<sup>15</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989), 2 Mac 2:5–8.

banquet. According to this view, Jesus promises the overcomers entrance to the eternal victory celebration in heaven. <sup>16</sup>



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<sup>16</sup> <https://www.gotquestions.org/white-stone-new-name.html>