

## **The Lord's Word to His Church: Pergamum**

### **Revelation 2:12–17 KJRV**

The Book of Leviticus is instruction for the Levitical priests in Israel so that they could lead the people of God in proper worship.

Leviticus is God's instruction for His newly redeemed people.

Egypt was a land of almost infinite deities. The Jews concept of worship was distorted, and clouded, and unclear, because they had been exposed to the madness of the worship of idols in Egypt.

**Leviticus Chapter 18**, The motive is always the same: **“Be ye holy, for I am holy.”** I am holy; I am the Lord; you be holy.” So, Leviticus, then, is essentially a manual for worship.

**Leviticus Chapter 18, verses 1 to 5**, sums up what this is all about: **“Then the Lord spoke to Moses.”**

**The Lord spoke to Moses** saying, **‘Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them: “I am the Lord your God”’**” - That is to say, there is no other God – **““I am the Lord your God. So, you shall not do what is done in the land of Egypt where you lived, nor are you to do what is done in the land of Canaan where I'm bringing you; you shall not walk in their statutes.**

**You are to perform My judgments and keep My statues, to live in accord with them; I am the Lord your God. So, you shall keep my statues and My judgments, by which a man may live if he does them; I am the Lord.”””**

**We see in Chapter 18 from verse 6-20 God prohibiting his chosen people from sexual relations from close relatives, to adultery, to homosexuality, to animals.**

**Why all of this? Because that’s how those people behaved. That’s life in Egypt. That’s life in Canaan. “Don’t,” verse 24, “defile yourselves by any of these things; for by all these the nations which I am casting out before you have become defiled.” Verse 26: “As for you, you are to keep My statues and My judgments.”**

**Verse 30, “You are to keep My commands, do not practice any of the abominable customs which have been practiced before you, so as not to defile yourselves with them; I am the Lord your God.”**

**And right into chapter 19: “Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: ‘Speak to all the congregation of the sons of Israel and say to them, “You shall be holy, for I, the Lord your God am holy.””” And verse 4, “Do not turn to idols or make for yourselves molten gods; I am the Lord your God.”**

**James 4:4, “Friendship with the world is hostility toward God.” Or, 1 John 2, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”**

**You cannot worship God and conduct your life according to the very world from which you have been rescued. Ref: James 4:4;1<sup>st</sup> John 2**

**Paul says at the end of Galatians, “I have been crucified to the world, and the world to me. I am dead to that system; I have come out of that.”**

**The church today, the church “of Jesus Christ,” is working very hard to be as much like the culture as possible, instead of fleeing those things.**

**Church has become sinner-friendly instead of sinner-frightening.**

**Churches don't like the idea that they're an offense to the culture, and they think that if they can just get close to everything that people enjoy in the culture, they can somehow win them over.**

**Pragmatism essentially is a philosophy that says the worth of anything is determined by its practical consequences – that's pragmatism. .**

**Utilitarianism says usefulness is the standard of what is good. If it works, if it produces the desired effect, then we do it. .**

**The church, strangely enough, has bought into the philosophy of pragmatism and utilitarianism and decided that if it draws a crowd, if it captures people's attention, it's good; and if it works, we're going to use it, even if it fails to be a separation from the world.**

**As the pagan world becomes more hostile to the truth of God, as it becomes more hostile to the people of God, churches will compromise. They've already shown they will do that. They will compromise to be more attractive.**

**. The letter to Ephesus extolled them for so many good things, and then said, "You've got one dire fault: you've left your first love."**

**The letter to Smyrna, no condemnation at all. Smyrna was a faithful church. Smyrna was a persecuted church.**

**Chapter 2, verse 9: "I know your tribulation, your poverty. I know the blasphemy by those who say they're Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. You're going to suffer. The devil's about to cast some of you into prison. You'll be tested. You'll have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful unto death and I'll give you a crown of life."**

**Revelation Chapter 2: 12-17 "And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this: '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.**

**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.**

**So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth. 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.”**

**Christians there were in grave danger. The city was full of idolatry, full of immorality, and the Christians were targeted because one day a year, every year, the people were required to offer a sacrifice to the emperor; and if they didn't, they would die.**

**They had been rescued out of that culture, but it was a powerful force. There was no separation of religion and the body politic; there was no separation between social life and religious life.**

**The other introductions were comforting, encouraging. Pergamum was not only – listen – in danger from the world, but Pergamum was in more danger from the Lord for not separating from the world.**

**It is only a short step from compromise with the world to the judgment of the Lord. And “judgment “begins at the house of God.” .1<sup>st</sup> Peter 4:17**

**Verse 13: “I know where you dwell; I know. I know where you are; I know what’s going on. You dwell where Satan’s throne is.” ”**

**You dwell where Satan dwells. You live in Satan’s town.**

**The church at Smyrna had to deal with a synagogue of Satan – that was Jews.**

**The church at Pergamum has to deal with a throne of Satan that has Gentiles.**

**This church, this small body of believers, is literally fighting the lion in his own den. They’re waging war at Satan’s headquarters.**

**What exactly does that mean? What is the Lord saying? Well, we know this: there was an altar there to Zeus that dominated the acropolis. The acropolis is always the high place. It was not just an altar. When I say an altar, it was much more than that. It was massive. It was a monumental colonnade at the acropolis.**

**It was a massive edifice to Zeus. One of the great works of art in the Greek world, really dedicated to Satan. There is no Zeus; there’s only Satan. It’s an altar to Satan. It was Satan’s throne.**

There was also there an unforgettable and amazing monument to Asclepius, the god of healing – you may know that name – the god of healing.

Now, Asclepius was depicted as a snake. You even see him on the figure that represents medicine. He's depicted as a snake.

**Revelation 12:9** calls Satan “**the great dragon, the serpent**”

There was another element, the emperor cult, which really dominated everything. This was the most, the most powerful influence in Pergamum.

Despite all of the satanic power and influence, a wonderful commendation: “**You hold fast My name.**” “**You are faithful to My name – My name, the Lord Jesus Christ.**”

And they were also like John who was imprisoned “because of the Word of God.” They “did not deny My faith.” They held onto His name. They were faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ. “And they held onto My faith.”

That's not subjective, that's objective. That's *the* faith, “once for all delivered to the saints.” They were faithful to Christ and to sound doctrine. They were Christ lovers, and they were truth lovers like John.

In fact, they were so faithful to Christ and so faithful to sound doctrine, the gospel, **“even in the days of Antipas.”** Those must have been days when Christians were being killed, and Antipas, very likely, was their pastor. **“My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.”**

He is **“My witness.”** That’s the word *martus*, from which we get *martyr*. Started out meaning “witness.” But because so many Christians were killed for their witness, the word *martus* became *martyr*.

But, from the commendation comes a condemnation, verse 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 commit acts of immorality. So, you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.”**

Some in Pergamum were falling to the seducing sirens of the devil’s culture, Satan’s culture.

The church at Pergamum had people in the church living like pagans, and the church had tolerated this teaching and this compromise, corrupting the household of the Lord. They weren’t separated.

Pergamos, literally, a church on the brink of judgment. Not only in danger of the culture around it, but in greater danger of the Lord above it.



Finally, a commendation, a condemnation, a command, and then commitment, **verse 17: “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”**

And then here comes this commitment; it’s a magnificent commitment - “To him who overcomes.” What is that? “To a true believer.”

First John 4:4 and 5 talks about it’s our faith that makes us overcomers. So, to those who are overcomers by virtue of true faith, to true believers, the overcomers – and they’re called that in each of the letters – the Lord makes a commitment to give us three things.

First: “To him, I will give some of the hidden manna,” or “I will give of the hidden manna.”

God will provide all your sustenance and provide it all through One who is Himself the Bread of Life, the Lord Jesus Christ. The promise guarantees that we will be blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ.

Secondly: “I will give you a white stone,”

The Roman custom was to give white stones to a victor, and that white stone in the victor’s hand became his ticket to the great feast of victors. When the feast was given, he would come and his entrance would be granted if he had a white stone.

**More than that, this identifies you as an overcomer, a victor, more than a conqueror. And it means you have complete access to all the lavish provision that God has.**

**But there's number three. On that white stone is "a new name written...which no one knows, but he who receives it."**

**The victor would have his name engraved on the stone, and that would be his access to all the regalia that belong to those who triumphed. The Lord is going to give you a new name.**

**When Christ humbled Himself, God exalted Him, and gave Him a *name* above every name" That's going to happen to us. When we go into glory as overcomers, we'll have the white stone, we have triumphed in Christ. We'll have access to the marriage supper of the Lamb and all the joys of heaven.**

**And we'll have a new name – a completely new, eternal, perfect identification – and it's a name because each of us is distinct.**

**Each of us is a person in and of ourselves, who will be loved. That's hinted at when our Lord in verse 13 says, "Antipas, My witness." "Antipas, My faithful one who was killed among you." The Lord knows those that are His.**

