

## **Chapter 7**

### **The Church at Pergamos**

*“And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write ...”  
(Revelation 2:12)*

Around 313 AD, the new Roman emperor, Constantine, was converted to Christianity. It seemed a time of rejoicing to Christians throughout the empire because it meant the end of persecution, at least from the Roman government. New laws were put into place protecting Christians. Constantine issued “The Edict of Milan” commanding the tolerance of the Christian religion, ordered that Sunday (the now celebrated day of Christians honoring the day of Christ’s resurrection) be given the same honor as other pagan feasts and celebrations, made it illegal for the Jews to stone Christians to death, and issued a decree to stop the gladiator sports (even though this persisted until the fifth century).

It seemed a new day had dawned for Christians. They could finally worship the Lord without going into hiding and they could pursue the same occupations and comforts of others in the empire. But it also caused a whole new set of problems. Even though they were now recognized by the Roman government, their tolerance demanded that they also accept some of the pagan religions as well. In order to get along with the government compromise was in order. While that might seem to be the right thing to do to honor the freedom of all men, we can never accept and condone the practices of false religions as equal with the teachings of Jesus Christ.

For this reason the letter to Pergamos begins with the description of Jesus as “He who has the sharp two-edged sword.” In the first chapter of Revelation Christ is described as having a double-edged sword coming from His mouth. The double-edged sword is that which divides in two. It separates good from evil and allows no tolerance of evil. Because it comes from His mouth it can be no other than the word of God. This description of Christ is pertinent to their compromise. It demands that we do not compromise.

Jesus further states that He knows that they are living where Satan’s throne stands. In other words, they are right in the middle of all that goes against God. There were still many true believers there because Jesus tells them that He knew of their works, how that they had held strong in their faith and did not deny Him even when one Antipas was martyred there.

This congregation held to Christian values but they also allowed things among believers that rubbed raw against the Lord. They are accused of allowing the teachings of Balaam which stated that it wasn’t wrong to eat things knowingly sacrificed to idols and to commit sexual impurity. Apparently they allowed those who held to these things to be accepted as members of their congregation. Also, there were found among them those who also held to the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. In the first letter we stated that these were those who depended more on their

own organization and their own efforts and provisions rather than those of Christ. Jesus plainly stated that He hated this doctrine. Still, they had allowed it. It was plainly a congregation of compromise.

They are told to quickly repent or they would find themselves fighting with Jesus who would use the sword of His mouth against them – He would fight them with the very word of God that they were supposed to be holding too. Those overcoming were promised to eat of the hidden manna – the food from God, and would be given a white stone with a new secret name written on it that no one else knew. In this time period when a vote was cast it was done by white and black stones. A white stone meant acceptance while a black stone represented rejection. The white stoned promised by Jesus meant that they would be accepted by Him. This was a promise worth holding to.

Yet today we find those compromising in the Church. While many are sincere, true believers, there are also those who allow sexual impurity and compromise with the teachings of the world, even to the point that they don't believe the Bible to be the final authority. They hold to their organizational beliefs and insist on complete obedience to their own teachings. While some organization is a very good thing, when it supersedes the word of God and their own beliefs are held to even when proven wrong by the Bible, then they are in extreme danger of being like this compromising congregation. We must overcome.