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## OPENING COMMENT

The fact that Jesus addresses 7 churches even though there were many more than that in the area would tell us something about the application of these letters. They were addressed to specific churches but are intended for a larger historical church to lend an ear to. The words spoken to Ephesus, Smyrna, and Pergamum are specific to them, but absolutely applicable for us. Our response then to the commendations, warnings, commands, and promises of Christ should be in line with his sovereign authority. Often, though, we find ourselves apathetic or ambivalent and find ourselves allowing other voices to take priority in our lives.

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## READ THE TEXT: Revelation 2:12-17

<sup>12</sup> "And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: 'The words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword.

<sup>13</sup> "'I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. Yet you hold fast my name, and you did not deny my faith even in the days of Antipas my faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. <sup>14</sup> But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality. <sup>15</sup> So also you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. <sup>16</sup> Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth. <sup>17</sup> He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.'



## UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

1. What imagery does this descriptor of Jesus bring to mind?
2. In what ways was the church being commended by Christ? What about that is surprising?
3. What is the sin that these teachers are enticing the Pergamum church towards?
4. What is Jesus response to the teaching of the Nicolaitans? Cf. Ephesians 2:6
5. What is Jesus command to the church? What does that mean in this context?
6. What is the threat associated with the command?
7. What is the reward for those who persevere? What is clear about this promise and what is confusing?

## APPLYING THE TEXT

1. The introduction to this specific letter is intended to remind the hearer of the judicial authority Christ has. In what areas do you resist that authority in your life? Where is that authority a comfort?
2. Pergamum was a place of worship and philosophical knowledge which was infiltrating the church with false teachers. What would our cultural equivalents be to Zeus, emperor worship, or Asclepius worship?
3. What areas in our modern culture do we see compromise leading toward idolatry and moral corruption?
4. What areas do you need to heed the call to repent? How would you go about doing that?
5. The call of the church is to be holy and at the same time compassionate, loving, grace-filled, and humble. What does it look like to remain faithful and holy, yet extend these virtues to those around us in sin?
6. Jesus promises a pass to the wedding feast to those who conquer. What motivation does this give us to heed his warning and obey his commands?
7. How might the call of Christ work as an evangelistic tool to those who do not know Jesus?

## BIBLICAL THREAD

1. Exodus 16 – Bread from Heaven
2. Numbers 22 – 24 – Story of Balaam
3. Numbers 25:1-3, and Numbers 31 – the corruption of the people of Israel at Balaam's counsel.
4. John 6:22-40 – Jesus as the bread from heaven.
5. 2 Timothy 2:14-26 – worker approved by God understanding the threat of false teaching.
6. Hebrews 4:11-13 – Word of God used to divide thoughts and intentions.
7. 1 Peter 4:1-6 – Thinking suffering as Christ.
8. 2 Peter 2:1-3 – False teachers among you
9. Revelation 19:11-16 – Jesus coming to judge the nations with the sword.



## CONCLUSION

The warning to the church at Pergamum is about doctrinal purity. In the end Jesus threatens to bring judgment because they were tolerating teaching that would lead to idolatry and moral compromise. The call to repent is both leveled at those who are tolerating the teaching and those perpetuating it. This call is merciful call to change our thinking, our tolerance for, and our inclusion of those who teach towards compromised morality and idolatry. Yet we cannot forget that the same mercy Christ showed the church (warning them with mercy and grace) is how we ought to approach teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness because our goal is to make sure everyone is thoroughly equipped for the good works ahead.

## SHARE & PRAY

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### LIFE GROUP VISION:

The goal to meeting together around the word of God is three-fold. First, we want to more clearly understand what God is saying to us through his Word and apply it to our own hearts and minds. Secondly, we want to build a loving community with each other to disciple one another toward maturity in Christ. Thirdly, we desire each of us, as ambassadors of Christ, to look outwards to our community and ask how we can bring the truth of the gospel to bear on those whom God has placed in our lives.

