

# THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST – LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN PERGAMOS 2:12-15

## OBSERVATION

## INTERPRETATION

## APPLICATION

Monday 7:30pm, H 106 (1st floor, High School--foot of stairs, behind the gym, by doughnut/vending machine area), Tuesday 7:00am, Family, Room, CCCM – Phil Twente, cell # 714 425 9221; email – [ptwente@gmail.com](mailto:ptwente@gmail.com) For past studies, audio plus notes, go to: <http://www.missioncalvary.com/> Click on “Bible Studies” on the left column. References include commentaries by Pastor Chuck Smith, Vernon McGee, David Hocking, Warren Wiersby and others.

### **“PAGANISM UNLIMITED”**

*Rev 2:12 "And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, 'These things says **He who has the sharp two-edged sword** (ramphia-long, heavy, smiting sword-brings a fatal blow, in judgment):*

*Rev 2:13 "I know your works, and **where you dwell, where Satan's throne is.***

Notice four things:

V 13. PERGAMOS WAS A DANGEROUS ENVIRONMENT - 13  
Vs. 14-15. PERGAMOS HEARD A SERIOUS EVALUATION - 14-15  
V 16. PERGAMOS RECEIVED A STRONG EXHORTATION - 16  
V 17. OVERCOMERS WERE GIVEN A WONDERFUL ENCOURAGEMENT - 17

V 13. PERGAMOS WAS A DANGEROUS ENVIRONMENT - 13  
“where you dwell”

13A. In terms of SATANIC CONFLICT

a. The Position of the enemy

“where Satan's throne is” - perhaps a reference to the giant altar of Zeus on the acropolis. This pagan worship is directly traceable to BAAL worship and to ancient BABYLON.

After the fall of Babylon and destruction of its temples, the high-priest of the Babylonian religion fled with his initiates and their sacred vessels and images, and came to Pergamos, where the symbol of the serpent was set up as the emblem of the hidden wisdom.

From there, they crossed the sea and came to Italy.

The ancient cult was propagated under the name of Etruscan Mysteries, and eventually Rome became the headquarters of the ancient religion of Babylon.

The high priest took the title of “Pontifex Maximus” (Supreme Pontif) - Julius Caesar was one of them and was elected to the position of high priest. All of the Roman emperors from Augustine to Constantine held the title.

When Rome fell in 476AD, what authority did the Bishop of Rome take? Damasus was the first one to take the same title as the Caesars-Pontifex Maximus

“Satan” – 19 times in OT, 14 in *Job 1&2*; 36 times in NT.

Identified as “that old serpent”; *Rev. 12:9; 20:2*

“the devil” 0 time OT; 61 times NT.

“Devils” (demons) 4 times OT; 51 times NT. 42 times gospels/synoptics.

“Unclean spirits” 28 times – 1 in OT.

“Adversary” *1 Tim. 5:14; 1 Pet. 5:8*

“Accuser of the Brethren” *Rev. 12:10*

“god of this world” *2 Cor. 4:4*

“prince of the power of the air”

“the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience” *Eph. 2:2*

“the enemy that sowed the tares” *Matt. 13:39*

“the wicked one” 4 times

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: PERGAMOS** - located 55 miles north of Smyrna, and 15 miles from the Aegean Sea. In 29 b.c. it was given permission to erect and dedicate a temple to Augustus, reputed to be the first heathen temple in Asia that was dedicated to the worship of Caesar.

The last king of Pergamos, Attalus III, bequeathed his territory to Rome and Pergamos was made the capital city of the Roman province of Asia.

A great university was there with a library of over 200,000 volumes, which was sent to Egypt by Mark Antony as a gift to Cleopatra.

The name of the city comes from words for parchment/paper, or from a word meaning “tower” (pergos) and a word for “marriage” (gamos) two ideas: marriage + elevation.

The acropolis (high city) is 1000 feet high above the city, with an amphitheater seating 10,000 people on the side of the mountain.

On top of the mountain is a giant altar to Zeus (Greek #1 god), 800 feet above ground, seen for miles - the altar was 100 feet square. There were temples on the Acropolis to Athena and Dionysius.

Pergamos was known for its medical school and worship of the god of healing, Aesculapius or Asklepios, symbolized by a serpent (still used by the medical profession today).

It was also known for its school of psychology with use of a therapy tunnel and mineral baths and healing waters.

The worship of the emperor was very strong - Christians were in danger 365 days a year, not just the one day in which incense was to be burned, by every resident, proclaiming, “Caesar is Lord.” When Pergamos is used as “church in general”, the time period is about 314AD-590AD. (Rome fell in 476AD)

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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.

Rev 2:14 But **I have a few things against you,**

**because you have there those (some) 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.**

b. The Presence of the enemy - “where Satan dwells” Is it to be taken literally or symbolically?

1D. His character - Murderer – John 8:4; Deceiver – Rev. 12:9; 2 Cor. 11:3; Liar – John 8:44; Confirmed sinner – 1 John 3:8

2D. His control

1E. A vast demonic Kingdom – Matt. 25:41; Rev. 12:7; A world-system of unbelievers – 1 John 5:19

Satan is not omnipresent, but through his demonic forces, it may seem that way.

13B. In terms of SPIRITUAL COMMITMENT - two statements indicate the difficulties which the believers were experiencing.

1C. Personal loyalty - “you hold fast (krateo-to adhere strongly) to my name” - The key battleground was the deity of Jesus Christ. - Cf. Matt. 10:32-33; Rom. 10:9-10; Phil. 2:9-11; 1 John 2:18-24, 26 Is not the common denial of all cults and isms, the denial of the deity of Jesus Christ?

2C. Public confession - “and did not deny My faith” - ANTIPAS - “against all” - perhaps he had to stand alone for his faith. Would you ever deny the Lord? Consider Peter - Luke 22:31-34, 54-62 -- According to Christian tradition, the first bishop of Pergamon, Antipas, was martyred there in ca. 92 AD. (Revelation 2:13)

1A. PERGAMOS WAS A DANGEROUS ENVIRONMENT - 13

Vs. 14-15. PERGAMOS HEARD A SERIOUS EVALUATION - 14-15

To EPHEBUS: “I have this against you”

To PERGAMOS: “I have a few things against you”

1B. The doctrine of BALAAM

“because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam”

Cf. Numbers 22-24; 25:1-3; 31:16 - cf. 1 Timothy 6:9-10; 2 Peter 2:12-16 (the way of Balaam-who loved the wages of unrighteousness); Jude 11 (error of Balaam for profit) Greed, reward for profit; we merchandise the things of the Lord for personal gain!

Balaam appears to be a gentile - Deut. 23:4-5; Joshua 13:22; Num. 22:5; 23:7 - 60 times - Numbers 22-24, 31 - 3 times in NT. 1 Pet. 2:15; Rev. 2:14;

1C. To put a stumbling block before the children of Israel tempt them to marry the women of Moab

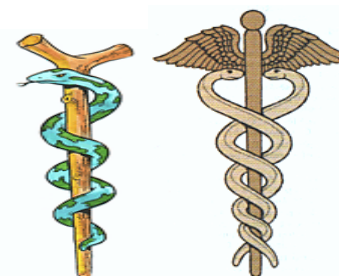
2C. To Compromise with pagan practices

“to eat things sacrificed unto idols” - cf. 1 Cor. 8: 13; 10:14, 21

3C. To Commit sexual sin

“to commit sexual immorality”

Asclepius was a Greek hero who later become the Greek god of medicine and healing. The son of Apollo and Coronis, Asclepius had five daughters, Aceso, Iaso, Panacea, Aglea and Hygieia. He was worshipped throughout the Greek world but his most famous sanctuary was located in Epidaurus which is situated in the northeastern Peloponnese. The main attribute of Asclepius is a physician's staff with an Asclepian snake wrapped around it; this is how he was distinguished in the art of healing, and his attribute still survives to this day as the symbol of the modern medical profession. The cock was also sacred to Asclepius and was the bird they sacrificed as his altar.



**An Associated Press article from about November, 1994, discussed the accuracy of using the caduceus as the symbol for medicine.**

Balaam of Scripture is thoroughly reprehensible. He becomes a paradigm of evil, a nearly satanic figure. Balaam was a prophet who specialized in animal divination. He would inspect the liver of a ritually slain animal to ascertain from its shape and marking the will of the gods. Such prophets also observed the movements of animals and birds in order to ascertain certain signs from the gods. It was thought that such prophets could in some mysterious manner influence the gods by various frites. Balaam was an internationally known soothsayer.

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**Rev 2:15 Thus *you also have those (some) who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.***

**2B. The doctrine of the NICOLAITANS**  
**“Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate” (cf. 2:6) “ALSO” - in the same way (NASB) - Immorality and compromise; so much wickedness in the area of the seven churches-difficult to live for the Lord!**  
**Instead of holding to My doctrine you are compromising and holding to the doctrines of Baalam and the Nicolaitans.**

We need to walk rightly with the Lord. We need to come clean! Are there areas of compromise in your life?

Is there any “one foot in the world” and one foot walking with the Lord?

***Ps. 119: 113 – I hate the double minded, but I love your law!***

***1 John 5:21 – Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen***

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**Questions:** 1. V 13 Is “where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is” literal or metaphorical? Do you think Satan literally set up his throne at Pergamos? (prox. 530BC-125BC). From where and to where did his throne move?  
2. After the fall of Babylon and destruction of its temples, where did the high-priest of the Babylonian religion and his initiates and their sacred vessels and images, flee to?  
3. What emblem was set up in Pergamos as the emblem of the hidden wisdom? - Aesculapius  
4. Later this ancient religion of Babylon moved again, where did it move to this time?  
5. What name was this ancient cult propagated under? (Etruscan Mysteries).  
6. What city eventually became the headquarters of the ancient religion of Babylon?  
7. What title did the high priest in Rome take? -- “Pontifex Maximus” (Supreme Pontif)  
8. What title was taken by the Caesars of the Roman Empire?  
9. What is the title of the Roman Catholic Pope today?  
10. When Rome fell in 476AD, what authority did the Bishop of Rome take? Damasus was the first one to take this title as the Caesars--Pontifex Maximus.  
11. What things did the Lord commend Pergamos for?  
12. Does the Bible teach that you have to confess that Jesus is Lord to be saved? Is not the common denial of all cults and isms, the denial of the deity of Jesus Christ? And you hold fast to My name,  
13. Would you or will you be willing, under any circumstances, to publically confess that Jesus is Christ?  
14. What things did He rebuke them for?  
15. What is the doctrine of Baalam?  
16. Are there areas of compromise in your life?

### INTERPRETATION

#### Move of the Babylonian Religion from Babylon to Pergamum; then to Rome!

When the Medes and Persians conquered Babylon in 539 B.C, they came with their own religious practices and gods, so had no need of the priests of the Babylonian religious system. Although the Persians were sympathetic towards the Babylonian god Marduk and did accommodate the priests of this god for a while, it *appears* from history that they eventually fired the priests and used their own. The Babylonian priests left Babylon (*probably because they were out of work*) and most of them went to Pergamum and some to Egypt where they taught their religious practices to the Egyptians. The Egyptians readily picked up these Babylonian religious concepts and further extended and developed some of the ideas we find in astrology.

The teaching of the Babylonian religious practices by the Babylonian priests and their direct descendants went on in the city of Pergamum for centuries afterwards. They taught astrology and the making of amulets with the numbers 1 to 36 on them in the special arrangements they commonly used. This continued until about the year 133 B.C. when the last king of the Attalid Empire, (Eumenes’ son, Attalus III) who had his capital at Pergamum, died without an heir and bequeathed his kingdom to Rome. Rome accepted the kingdom and set up the province of Asia, which included Ionia and the territory of Pergamum by **129 B.C. Sometime soon after this, the priests who were still teaching the Babylonian religious practices saw their opportunity and went to Rome.** The Romans often adopted the religious practices of other cultures, which also helped the empire survive as long as it did. The Babylonian priests rightly calculated that the Romans would be very willing to learn and follow their teachings. Soon all of Rome filled with their religious teachings and practices. It eventually became so pervasive that people called Rome the “[New Babylon](#).” Early Christians also used the term Babylon as a veiled code word for a particular city, so as to avoid persecution from that pagan power. That city was also Rome. See also [1 Peter 5:13](#). When the Christian Church came along, the practices and beliefs of the Babylonian religion followed right into the Church. Historians have said that it seemed almost the entire city of Rome converted virtually overnight to Christianity, but what actually happened is that the Babylonian religion was simply brought into the Church and the three supreme gods of the Babylonian religion were simply renamed as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Lesser gods became saints of the Church. The pagan Babylonian religious practices came into the Church right along with it. This made it easy for the followers of the Babylonian religion to *convert* to Christianity, but it certainly was not a genuine conversion. God condemns pagan religious practices, but they brought these practices into the Church anyway.

### APPLICATION

History fully supports this. The pagan Babylonian priests had a chief priest who held the title Pontifex Maximus (*translated to Latin meant that he was head pagan priest or literally the Greatest Pontiff*). Most have heard the word “Pontiff” applied to the Pope and history explains where that term comes from.

**Originally, the king of the Attalid Empire held the title of Pontiff, and he passed it on to the Babylonian Priests before he died and they went to Rome. This title was given to Julius Caesar in 63 B.C. thereby making him the supreme priest of the Babylonian Religion and its gods.** (*This shows that the Babylonian priests arrived in Rome before the time of Julius Caesar or this event could not have happened.*)

**This meant that the Babylonian religion literally moved into Rome and took it over, becoming head of the Roman government. This title passed from emperor to emperor, all of whom served as chief priest of the Babylonian Religion from then on until 367 A.D.** where the Roman Emperor Gratian became the first since Julius Caesar to refuse the title Pontifex Maximus. Before Gratian refused the title **Pontifex Maximus, the young Emperor bestowed it upon Pope Damasus I, who became the first Pope in history to hold the title.** This made him head of the Babylonian religion when he took the title of Pontifex Maximus. **Damasus I was the head of the Christian Church in Rome, and took the title as head of the pagan Babylonian Religion and its collection of pagan gods.** Did the Babylonian Religion move into the Christian Church? History says most definitely YES. So why does God call the Papal Church Babylon? The answer should now be clear.

Some dispute that Church leaders incorporated pagan Babylonian religious practices into the Catholic Church but even Catholic historians admit it. Cardinal Newman in his Development of Christian Doctrine, pages [372](#), [373](#) says that the Church incorporated many pagan religious practices into the Church. He claims that the Church sanctified them and that made it safe to bring these practices into the Church. Every year Catholic Pilgrims kiss the feet of the Roman god Jupiter thinking they are kissing the image of Peter. God condemns idolatry, the making of images for worship, and even bowing down before images as part of an act of worship. Yet many images are in Catholic Churches and the Church teaches people to bow down before them. They may be praying to someone else but the act of bowing down before the image, regardless of what or who one is actually worshipping at the time is plainly what God condemns in [Exodus 20:4-6](#).