

Pergamum: The Compromising Church

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[0:00] Revelation 2, verses 12-17.

And the angel of the church in Pergamum write, the words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword. I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. Yet you hold fast my name and you do not deny my faith, even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was killed among you where Satan dwells.

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.

So also you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Therefore, repent. If not, I will come to you soon and 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 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.

[1:13] So as we've talked a lot about, as we've gone through the book of Hosea on Sunday mornings, you guys are, you know, I know many of you are aware of God's delivering the Israelites in the Old Testament from the Egyptians and how that served not only to free them from slavery and their bondage to the Egyptians, but it also served to rescue them from the corrupting influence that Egyptian culture was having on them and their idolatrous worship in that culture.

The Egyptians, like the Greeks and Romans and others, worshipped many gods. Though God had rescued them from this, over time their concept of worship became distorted. Even after their miraculous delivery from Egypt through the Red Sea on dry land, on top of all the other things that God had done, the miracles He had performed, and as they were taken out of that land, still the hearts and minds of Israel were often caught up in idolatry.

For instance, when Moses did not immediately return from Mount Sinai, not long after they had been delivered, Aaron and the Israelites panicked and they made a golden calf to serve as their new god.

And if you know, if you studied that scripture, you know that that did not end well for any of them. In order to establish then his pattern for acceptable worship and to break the influence of idolatry and paganism's influence on his people, God gave his people the book of Leviticus.

And over and over again in Leviticus, it stresses the need to deal with sin and how to appropriate sacrifices and how to protect the purity of God's people.

[3:06] And it also served to establish a pattern for how God's people were to follow him. And so again, God gave them the book of Leviticus.

In Leviticus chapter 18, verses 1 through 5, that's really the heart of the book. And in these verses, God delivers His fundamental commands to reject the practices of the surrounding nations.

I want to read that to you. Leviticus 18, 1 through 5. And the Lord spoke to Moses saying, Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, I am the Lord your God. You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt where you lived, and you shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan to which I am bringing you.

You shall not walk in their statutes. You shall follow my rules and keep my statutes and walk in them. I am the Lord your God. You shall therefore keep my statutes and my rules.

If a person does them, he shall live by them. I am the Lord. So God is basically saying this to them. He's saying, You are no longer idolaters. You are now the people of the true and living God.

[4:06] You cannot continue in the pattern and the ways of the pagan nations where you once lived, where you're going. You will worship me because you're mine. That's pretty much concisely

what God is saying to them.

The verses then that follow spell out the behaviors of the pagan nations that they are prohibited from engaging in. Adultery, homosexuality, incest, bestiality, and child sacrifices to name some. These activities were common practices in everyday practices in Egypt and amongst those people who occupied the land of Canaan where the Israelites were going eventually to conquer it. The Lord then reiterates His earlier commandment in verse 24. He says, Do not make yourselves unclean by any of these things.

For by all these the nations I am driving out before you have become unclean. And then in verse 30, He says, So keep my charge never to practice any of these abominable customs that were practiced before you and never to make yourselves unclean by them.

[5:12] I am the Lord your God. So God was calling His people to a spiritual separation from those who are around them. To be distant, to be distinct I should say, to be different and divided from the rest of the world in their wicked ways.

And so here's the main idea for our study tonight. The Lord demands single-minded devotion and He desires pure worship. He commanded the Israelites to be separated from the corrupting influence of the world and He calls the church to do the same.

And I'll read that again. The Lord demands single-minded devotion and He desires pure worship. He commanded the Israelites to be separated from the corrupting influence of the world and He calls His church to do the same today.

So the first point here is that the compromising church works hard to appeal, not appear, sorry, to appeal, no, appear, sorry, not appeal, to appear as much like the culture as possible.

The compromising church works hard to appear as much like the culture as possible. Pergamum was a church that was compromised, as we'll see. For a long time now, it's been popular for church leaders to make their services look sound and feel like secular gatherings and events.

[6:40] In fact, you could walk into many newer church buildings today and not be able to tell that you're in a church. You could walk in and think maybe that you're in a movie theater in some cases or that you're in a concert venue in others and even in some, like you're in a school in others where it feels like you're in a Chuck E. Cheese.

I mean, honestly. And the fact of the matter is is that they do this intentionally because they want people to feel comfortable like going into church is like going into any place else.

These churches make every attempt to imitate the latest styles and fashion and pop culture trends desperate to seem relevant and cool.

people. One of the, I don't try to do a whole lot of social media. I'm on Facebook and then as a part of that, I'm on Instagram.

And I mean, I'm on, I have a profile there. I never really go on. But there's this page that I've drew interest to me. It's called Preachers and Sneakers. Has any of you guys ever heard of Preachers and Sneakers?

[7:48] And so it's this guy. It started as a joke. He just started taking pictures, screenshots of different megachurch pastors as they're preaching and he would look at their shoes and he would find them and how much they sold for retail and he'd put the picture of the guy in the shoes next to, and women, next to the picture of the person in their shoes and how much they cost.

And I mean, we're like the cheapest pair I think I've seen is like 500 bucks. A lot of them are wearing shoes that are thousands of dollars. And then he also does their jeans or their shirts and different things like that.

And it's all an attempt to, you know, present themselves as being relevant and cool. Now I know that things change, right?

As far as our clothing goes, none of us are wearing robes and sandals like they did during Jesus' days. None of us are wearing powdered wigs and knickers like they did back in the olden, olden days.

And so I don't mind, I really don't mind what people wear. On Sunday morning, I'm a believer that, you know, come as you are. Now, I hope that that doesn't mean your pajamas, you know, that you slept in the night before.

[9:05] But I want, I just, people here to hear the word and the message. But to me, what matters most is why you're wearing what you're wearing. And if you're wearing what you're wearing because you want to send a message to people, I mean, it depends on what that message is.

And I think a lot of times when you're dressing to try to impress people, we see a lot of pastors who are in their 40s and 50s and they're trying to stuff themselves into skinny jeans and it's just ridiculous to me.

But it's all an attempt, because I can't feel comfortable. It's all an attempt to try to seem cool and relevant to the world. And we all know why they're trying so hard.

Their philosophy is to do whatever it takes to get the desired effect. So then they design their churches and their buildings and their services around being more sinner-friendly than God-friendly. Instead of having a worship service, what they're really doing often is simply putting on a show. In fact, I was disappointed to go to a church of a pastor that I had written a book that I liked and I went to his church and I was really disappointed when I went.

[10:22] I was on vacation and so I purposely went to this guy's church because I was wanting to see what he was all about. And I think I've shared this before, but when I went to the service, I mean, it was very much like a concert environment.

And then he got up and preached. I mean, really bright flashing lights, different cameras. You had a camera in the drum bay watching the guy playing the drums and the keys like you would at a concert. That's quite a performance.

It was quite a performance. And so, then he got up and he was preaching about how we, as much as we don't want to create, we don't want to use these things to affect your feelings or to replace the feeling of the Holy Spirit in here and all these things.

I was just like, I don't think so. But then he was preaching and, you know, they brought out his table with his hot cup of coffee that was steaming that he never drank just for show and I was like, that's dumb.

But then he was preaching and he was doing well but I was like, he doesn't have any notes, you know, and I was like, that's really impressive. He must have a really great memory but then I kept noticing that he was looking right past my shoulder and I was sitting kind of in the middle.

[11:31] I was like, why is he, what's he looking at? And I turned and sure enough there's a teleprompter behind me. Now I have notes and I mean, you know, it's just kind of like I'm not trying to be overly critical but I think, you know, again, it was the point that he was trying to, it was the package of himself that he was trying to present, you know, be impressed by me because I don't have notes but I have my secret teleprompter over here.

I want to read a quote by John MacArthur. He says, as the world grows increasingly hostile to the gospel the sinner friendly church must compromise more and more to maintain its attractiveness. Refusing to be an offense to anyone they emphasize physical emotion not spiritual worship. Affirmation not conviction. Sentimentality not theology and entertainment not edification.

But I do want to make a note that we are sinner friendly in the fact that we want unbelievers here, don't we? We want them here. We want them to hear the gospel.

We hope that they will believe and be saved. But we don't want them here simply to pad our stats. To make our attendance numbers look better and to, you know, get money from them to increase our budget.

[12:54] So we want to be sinner friendly in the sense that, you know, when unbelievers come, we're glad you're here because we know when you're here you're going to hear the gospel and our hope is that you're going to be saved. You know, we want people in our church to be encouraged to invite their friends and their families, their co-workers who are unbelievers to church and know that they're going to hear the gospel when they come and, you know, we hope that they will be saved.

But we're not going to do that simply so that we can pad our stats and look more impressive or feel better about ourselves. Whereas the church in Smyrna that we covered last time was not running from the persecution they were enduring, the worldly, sinner friendly church does whatever it can to avoid persecution.

They will always fall in line with the world's expectations. And so you'll find that many churches, especially the larger ones, and not all large churches, don't get me wrong, are like this. Many of them are, there's many great ones. But it seems to me that a lot of them, especially those who have been given a larger platform to speak upon, more ears to hear, more eyes on them, they seem to say less about issues that are potentially divisive, that might potentially result in some of their members leading, like issues about homosexuality and what the Bible says about that. They become more vague in their stance on abortion. even some as we've, you know, it's been brought to my attention even in the SBC, that's becoming an issue.

[14:33] They're becoming instead more vocal on social justice issues because that's the thing of the day, that's what the world seems to care about, and so we're going to care about what the world cares about so that again we seem relevant and cool or hip or with it.

Many churches won't talk about sin, they certainly will avoid the subject of God's wrath towards it. They instead preach topical sermons that often focus on troublesome issues in life but rarely touch on the power, presence, and destructive damage of sin or naming it as an offense to God's holiness that is worthy of being judged, of facing his judgment.

Instead it's a therapeutic church culture designed to make sinners feel comfortable, welcome, and validated at any cost. However, these efforts don't make the gospel look more attractive, in fact it makes the gospel look weak.

These churches may be under the assumption that they are doing great things for the Lord, look we've got large crowds, look we're leading our denomination or our association in baptisms, but the reality is they're in fact doing a great disservice for Christ and for the progress of the gospel.

A church that's just like the world has nothing to offer the world. It's merely just one more disposable form of entertainment for them.

[16:00] And scripture reveals that this is not anything new. John 15, 18-20, Jesus said, if the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.

If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own, but because you are not of this world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, a servant is not greater than his master.

If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. And so since the earliest days of the church, believers have caved under the pressure to accommodate to the world.

And so Christ's letter to the church at Pergamum in Revelation establishes the severe danger of such compromise. So I want to give you some more information about this city where this church was in.

It was the capital city of Asia Minor. It was situated on a very high hill about 100 miles north of Ephesus. It wasn't a port city and it didn't sit on any major trade route during that time.

[17:11] Instead it was a center for culture and for education and for religion. The city's most notable feature was its library which contained 200,000 volumes which was a lot for a library back then.

In fact it was second only to Alexandria as far as libraries in the world and the amount of volumes that they contained. Pergamum again was situated on a large hill standing about 1,000 feet over the plains below but today as is the case for some of these other cities it is a city in ruins.

It's no longer a place where people live. Scripture doesn't tell us when the church at Pergamum was founded. It could have been during Paul's second missionary journey or it could have been while he was ministering in Ephesus that the church was planted there.

Pergamum viewed itself as being the defender of Greek culture in Asia Minor. There were temples there dedicated to Zeus, to Athena, to Asclepius and Dionysus.

However, like many of the cities of that region, the city was dominated primarily by emperor worship, worship of whomever the emperor of Rome was at the time. In fact, Pergamum was fiercely loyal to the Romans.

[18:36] And as a result of that, Christians faced danger and persecution annually if they failed to make the yearly sacrifice that was required for all the citizens to make to Caesar.

It was a daily threat then for the Christians to be in Pergamum. While the church in Pergamum faced danger from the world, most importantly it faced danger from the Lord.

Unlike the letters to Ephesus and Smyrna, Christ's letter to Pergamum starts with a threat. The Lord identifies himself as the one who has the two-edged sword in verse 12.

That's not a comforting salutation. You know? Christ was coming in judgment and he's saying I'm bringing my word.

I'm wielding it like a broad sword against you. Later in Revelation, John tells us that this is how the unrepentant world will see Christ when he comes in his final judgment.

[19:35] Revelation 19.15, from his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.

That is the same Lord who is writing to this church. However, he does include a word of commendation.

Although the church was guilty of compromise with the world, it was not without faithful believers. The Lord says in verse 13, 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, or Satan's throne.

And so we wonder, what does that refer to? Well, scholars think it could refer to a few different things. First of all, Pergamum was the home to a massive altar dedicated to Zeus, and you guys know who Zeus is.

He's the old man with the lightning bolts that he throws down when he's angry at people or whatever. This was a huge structure that dominated the city.

[20 : 55] Edwin Yamachi, who is a historian, said this of the altar. He said, the word altar is somewhat misleading. Because when we think of altar, we think of something kind of small, right?

He continues on, he says, the structure is a monumental colonnade court in the form of a horseshoe, 120 feet by 112 feet.

The podium of the altar was nearly 18 feet high. The great frieze, which would have been on the facade of the altar. You know how you see different old buildings and they have, it's like a battle scene and you see it all through the top, you know, and it's depicting this story.

And so that's what this giant altar had and what it was depicting was the fight between the gods and the giants. And he concludes by saying it was one of the greatest works of Hellenistic art.

It was a grand monument to Zeus, but in reality, as we know, there is no old man in the sky throwing lightning bolts at us because I hate to burst your bubble or I don't, you know, I don't hate to burst your bubble.

[22 : 14] There is no Zeus. In case you were wondering, Zeus does not exist. This altar then in fact truly belonged to who?

It belonged to Satan. And that could have been the throne that Christ was talking about. Other scholars believe that it was a reference to the shrine of Asclepius, the Greek god of healing, who was depicted as a snake.

Now, this one was interesting. So in his temple, there would be snakes crawling around. It was overrun with snakes. Now, the good news is that they were not poisonous snakes.

So the thought was that, hey, if you're sick and you're in need of healing, maybe you guys have heard what they would do, they would say, this is the prescription, right?

Go to the temple and lay on the ground and even take a nap or spend the night, and the snakes have the healing touch.

[23 : 19] So lay down and sleep and let the snakes crawl all over you. Yeah, hard pass on that one.

Others say, and so they say because Satan is so often in Scripture, you know, the serpent is so closely identified with him in Revelations, he's referred to the serpent a lot, and so they say, well, maybe that's the altar where, or the throne of Satan that is being referred to by Christ.

Others say that the throne of Satan could be in reference to the dominating cult of emperor worship that existed there. Again, simply declining to say Caesar is Lord could lead to your death. The exclusivity of the gospel made Christians a target because we know that Christ is Lord, so Satan's throne may simply be referring to the true power behind the cult worship of the Caesar.

And again, it could be any of those or it could be all of those that Christ is referring to. That there are so many possible locations in a city where Satan's throne could be tells you the situation that Pergamum was in.

There were many options in that city that could have been the throne of Satan or the place where Satan dwells. The inhabitants of Pergamum thought they observed a diverse collection of gods and goddesses, but again, we know that ultimately what they were truly worshiping was the devil.

[24 : 54] As the Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 10.20, the things which the Gentiles sacrificed to idols, they sacrificed to demons and not to God.

In spite of Satan's influence in this city, the Lord noted that the true believers in Pergamum he said, hold fast my name and did not deny the faith even in the days of Antipas my faithful witness who was killed among you.

And so now we wonder, well, who is this Antipas? Likely this referred to a period of fierce persecution that took place against the church in Pergamum.

Scripture doesn't tell us anything else about Antipas, who he was, where he came from, but his name would have been instantly familiar to the believers to that church in Pergamum when they received this message.

They knew this man, this was one of their brothers in Christ, and they certainly would have mourned his death. The word translated witness, in the Greek that's *martyr*, and that has become synonymous with believers whose witness for Christ cost them their lives, and that's how we get the transliterated word, martyr, witness.

[26 : 11] Tradition says that Antipas was a leader in the church and that he was roasted to death inside a brass bull during Domitian's campaign of persecution.

Yeah, the Romans and their ways of torturing and killing people, it's sickening.

And then, you know, to think that, you know, we are under the impression that we're experiencing severe persecution, nobody's tried to stick me in a brass bull, and I don't think they have to you too, so I mean, but yet still that persecution takes place throughout the world.

Point number two, the compromising church seeks, or I should say the compromising church is torn between friendship with the world and fellowship with God. God. The compromising church is torn between friendship with the world and fellowship with God.

So after a brief word of praise, the letter then pivots back to judgment. In verses 14 and 15 again, the Lord says, but I have a few things against you.

[27 : 21] You have some there who hold the teachings 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.

So also you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. During this time period, there was no separation of religion and state affairs.

They were intertwined. So virtually all aspects of the society back then included participating in temple rituals, festivals, and celebrations. Just as Israel fell back into idolatry after the exodus, some in the church at Pergamum were doing the same thing.

They were falling back into their old habits of paganism and encouraging others in their church to do the exact same thing. How do we know that? Well, the Lord tells us by singling out those who, He says, hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel.

You guys remember Balaam? Most people know Balaam for what? His talking donkey. Yeah. His talking donkey.

[28 : 35] This is a reference to Numbers 22, chapter 22 through 25, and Israel's conflict with the people of Moab. So back then, Balak was the king of Moab, and he heard that Israel was on the way.

And he had heard stories of what God had done for Israel and delivering them from Egypt, and he was terrified of them and what they might do to him and his people.

So, Scripture tells us in Numbers 22, 2 through 3, he saw that Israel had done to the Amorites as well, and Moab was in dread of the sons of Israel.

So Balak knew about the God of the Israelites. He was terrified of them, of what they had done to his neighbors and what they could potentially do to his nation as well. So, what he decided to do was to send for a man named Balaam.

And Balaam was a notorious prophet for hire, and he was a supposed sorcerer, and he was employed by Balak to curse the people of Israel, but the Lord, if you remember that story, stifled him every time, and so instead of using his mouth to curse the people, he used his mouth to bless the people of Israel instead.

[29 : 49] So, that strategy didn't work, so Balaam came up with another strategy. If he couldn't curse Israel, he would corrupt them. Numbers chapter 25 verses 1 and 2 says, While Israel remained at Shittim, the people began to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab, for they invited the people to the sacrifices of the God, and the people bowed down to their gods.

So, this is what Balaam did. He persuaded the women of Moab to intermarry with the men of Israel, pulling those men then into idolatry and the immoral culture of the Moabites.

And then they were coaxed back into the paganism with which they had escaped from Egypt. So, in Numbers 25 verses 3, So, Israel joined themselves to Baal of Peor, and the Lord, it says, was angry against them, and he was very angry.

This was a severe and widespread betrayal of God's people, and so the Lord's judgment included the death of 24,000 men of Israel for what they had done.

That was the teaching of Balaam that some in the church of Pergamum held to. They were throwing the same kind of seductive stumbling blocks in front of their fellow believers.

[31 : 13] The Lord had delivered them from that corrupt idolatry, and now others in the church were getting back involved, and they were inviting others within the church to do the very same thing.

So they would go to church, and then they would go to all the festivals, and they would participate, and all the different things that went on with those festivals, drunkenness, debauchery, all kinds of sexual immorality, and then they would go back to church the next day as if nothing happened.

Peter delivers a scathing rebuke against those who indulge the flesh and its corrupt desires and attempts to lure believers back into similar wickedness.

In 2 Peter 2, 13-14, he says, they count it pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are blots and blemishes reveling in their deceptions while they feast with you. They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin.

They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed, accursed children. Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray. They have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved gain from wrongdoing.

[32 : 23] Not only was that happening, there was another corrupting influence in the Pergamum church. The Lord says, you also have some who hold to the teachings of the Nicolaitans.

We've noted that before when we were covering the church in Ephesus. We don't really know specifically who the Nicolaitans were and specifically what it was that they taught.

We have some of the early church fathers and they seem to indicate that they lived lives of unchecked indulgence and that would certainly be a fitting comparison to the Balaamists who were in the church in Pergamum and who were a significant threat to the purity of the believers there.

Whatever they were doing, the Lord hated it. And he hated its presence in his church. He was angry that these heretics and deceivers were allowed to remain in the church unaddressed and unabated.

While some in the church held fast to Christ's name and did not deny the faith, they were doing a terrible job of guarding their flock. They sat and they watched as wolves picked off their sheep.

[33 : 37] The church at Pergamum was living out the warning of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthian church. In 2 Corinthians chapter 6 verses 14 and 17 it says, Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers.

For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever?

What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God as God has said, I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them and I will be their God and they shall be my people.

Therefore go out from their midst and be separate from them says the Lord and touch no unclean thing then I will welcome you. Pergamum had failed to separate completely from the unbelieving world.

They had compromised. They held the line on doctrine but not on holiness. Pergamum's friendship with the world was costing it dearly.

[34 : 44] As their church members were drifting back into the habits of their former lives and their former ways, what they needed to hear was the warning of James.

James 4.4, you adulterous people, do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

Christians need to remember that we have to fight a daily battle to break the habits of our former lives. that means training ourselves to deny our flesh and to put those old ways away.

To mortify the flesh. If you've ever heard of John Owen and the mortification of the flesh, that's a book that's very convicting.

But we are to do that every day seeking to put the old ways to death and present ourselves to Christ for his use. 1 John 2 15-17 Do not love the world or the things in the world.

[35 : 52] If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and the pride of life is not from the Father but is from the world.

And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever. Another quote from John MacArthur. He says, Too many churches today give no indication that the world is passing away.

They're consumed with the culture, ignorant to the corrupting influence they routinely invite into their midst or unmoved by the threat they represent. Countless churches including many of the largest and most influential evangelical churches are enthralled with themed messages based not on scripture but on various icons of worldly entertainment, popular movies, television series, hit songs, or even celebrities who have polarized these, or popularized these things.

I remember one such instance. This was a while ago, but recent, recent enough. There was a pastor, a very large church, and very well known.

He's not there anymore. Some problems happened. I don't think he's in ministry at all anymore as a matter of fact, but his idea to start off their Easter service, and this is a conservative church, at least I believe that it was a conservative church as we would consider it compared to others, was to start off the service with ACDC's Highway to Hell.

[37 : 22] You heard that? Dan, you know how to play some ACDC for us? Please don't. Not that you would even think about it, but you know, the lengths that people will go to, you know, for that shock value, too.

You can't believe what they did in church today. They played ACDC, Highway to Hell. I want to go to that church. Okay.

And you could probably share other stories. In fact, I had my brother-in-law who I've been praying for for a long time who is saved now. Praise the Lord. But when he was first going with my sister to church, and then we're from Kansas, Johnson County area, a large church, and he was confused because they would go to church and a lot of times the pastor's introduction was a movie clip.

And he'd be like, I really don't understand. Like, why are they playing movies in church? And he's an unbeliever. I was like, that's a good question. I don't know why. But just the lengths that we'll go to to try to shock and awe.

Just like Pergamum, the modern church's easy familiarity with the world has left it open to the compromises that corrupt. And just like Pergamum, it puts the church in a path of judgment by the Lord himself.

[38 : 45] There's good news. The remedy for the compromising church is to repent. The Lord says to them, therefore, repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth.

In verse 16. So Pergamum ought to be a warning to every church and to every Christian who believes that sound doctrine is enough on its own. That God is only interested in what we affirm, not in how we act.

That attitude has grown in popularity in recent years. Pergamum is a reminder that knowing the truth and living the truth are equally important in the eyes of our Lord.

Again, James 1.22. Prove yourselves doers of the word and not merely hearers who delude themselves. God's design for his redeemed people is to separate them from everything that characterizes the world and worldliness.

Now the question is, well, what kind of separation is he talking about? Are we supposed to live our lives in isolation from the rest of the world?

[39 : 52] Is that the answer? Should we, you know, live in little bubbles and have no doings with the world? No. what he's talking about, I think, is this fact.

We are in the world. We are in the world, but we're not of the world. Does that make sense? You guys understand that? We are in the world. We're here.

And listen, we have a mission to go and to make disciples. How are we going to do that if we're not in the world and seeking to share the gospel with unbelievers?

That's necessary. That's required. So we are in the world, but we are not of the world. That means, I think, that we don't do some of the things that they do.

We don't think in a lot of the ways that they think. We don't talk in a lot of the ways that they talk, and we don't share many of their values, because we know that truly we are in the world, but our true home, our true citizenship is in heaven.

[41:02] And finally, encouragement for the compromising church. The Lord tells them what they must do, they must repent, and then He gives them a word of encouragement.

To the faithful believers, the Lord promises three things. First there, He says, the hidden manna. And you remember, manna was the bread that God supplied the Israelites during their wilderness wandering in the Exodus.

And that manna pictured in many ways, it pointed to something greater, and it pictured in many ways the bread of life, Jesus Christ who would come.

John 6, 48-51, if you want to check that out later, that Christ is the bread of life. He supplies us with all the spiritual sustenance that we need. So when He promises their faithful believers that He will give them some of the hidden manna, this is a promise of the spiritual benefits that come in knowing and loving Him.

He also promised them a white stone. And you think, a white stone? What does that have to do with anything? Well, in the ancient world, again, which these people were familiar with because they lived in the ancient world, victorious athletes received a trophy in the games a lot of times, and it came in the form of a stone.

[42:22] It was a white stone with their name inscribed on it. And what it was also was an invitation to come to the victor's party that would take place whenever the games were over with.

So all those who are victorious, if you won the games, you were given that white stone with your name on it. In terms of eternity, then, this is a reminder of God's lavish provision and blessings in heaven.

We have that white stone. We have that promise from Him that we will be granted access to His kingdom. Then finally, Christ promises that on that stone will be written a new name which no one knows but he who receives it.

So if you're a believer in Jesus Christ, you know, you should know, I hope you know now, that you have this name and many people wonder, well, what is it?

And the answer is, I don't know. And you don't know. Only God knows and you won't know until the day where He gives that name to you.

[43:38] But I think I can be assured that whatever that name will be, it will be special. and in that name it will reflect the love that God has for you.

A name that marks out God's triumphant overcomers and reflects upon the fact that He is a loving Father who has adopted children. He to a son a son a son of!

! Thank you.