

# **“At The Foot of Satan’s Throne”**

**(Rev. 2:12-17)**

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**May 6, 2007**

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## **I. Introduction**

### **A. The ruthless reign of Emperor Diocletion**

1. The last and most vicious Roman persecutor of Christians
2. 5 million martyrs in 200 years
3. He thought he had killed the movement
4. He had a medal minted proclaiming victory

### **B. Then it happened....October 312 A.D.**

1. Diocletion was dead
  - a. The battle raged for the throne of the Roman Empire
    1. Constantine vs. Maxentius
    2. At Milvan bridge
    3. The future of the Roman Empire would be decided the next morning
  - b. That night Constantine saw a vision of a fiery cross in the sky
    1. *“In Hoc Signo Vincas”*
    2. “In this sign conquer!”
  - c. Believed it was sign from God
    1. If he would embrace Christianity...
    2. ....he would be given the victory

- d. Constantine won and was crowned Emperor of Rome
- 2. Shortly thereafter he issued “The Edict of Toleration” (312 AD)
  - a. The tattered Christians staggered into the sunlight
  - b. He showered favors on the Christian Church
    - 1. Made it the official religion of the Roman Empire
  - c. Government provided money for the operation of the Church
  - d. Pagan temples converted to Christian Churches
  - e. Pagan priests were made Christian priests
- 3. The rags of persecution were exchanged for the plush silk of the Imperial Palace
  - a. But with it.....purity was lost
  - b. Satan’s new strategy.....spoil the Church
- 4. The parallel with the Church in Pergamos

## **B. Review**

- 1. **Ephesus** (Rev. 2:1-7)
  - a. The “Apostolic Church”
  - b. Had great doctrine
    - 1. But lost their love and passion
  - c. Applies to ...
    - 1. That local body in Ephesus
    - 2. Local congregations of all ages
    - 3. Similar to a period of Church History

(33 → 94 A.D.)

## 2. **Smyrna** (Rev. 2:8-11)

- a. The “Persecuted Church”
- b. Refused to say that “Caesar is Lord”
- c. Paid with their lives
- d. Ephesus lost their *love*
  - 1. ...but, Smyrna lost their *lives*
- e. Applies to –
  - 1. That local body
  - 2. Suffering congregations of all ages
    - a. Including today
  - 3. Similar to a period of Church History
    - a. From 94 → 312 A.D.

## 3. **Pergamum** (Rev. 2:12-17)

- a. “The Indulged or Compromised Church”
  - 1. The “spoiled” church
  - 2. “Spoiled” in two senses
    - a. “Spoiled” with favors
    - b. And it went rotten
- b. One of Satan’s most effective weapons
  - 1. Far more effective than persecution
- c. Similar to a period of Church History
  - 1. From 312 – 606 A.D.

## II. Text

## A. The Author....v.12

1. *“He who has the sharp, double-edged sword”*
2. Description of Jesus in Rev. 1:16 – *“and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword.”*

## B. The Congregation (v.12)

1. Writing to Seven Churches of Asia Minor (Turkey)
2. Pergamum...the indulged church
3. The City
  - a. Two names are used
    1. Pergamos
    2. Pergamum
  - b. Site of the modern Turkish village of Bergama
    1. 55,000 people
  - c. Was famous in Roman and Greek Days
    1. Not for its commerce, like Ephesus
    2. But, for its culture and religious activity
  - d. Gorgeous setting
    1. Built on a tall conical hill which dominated the valley of the River Caicus
    2. Could see the Mediterranean 15 miles away
    3. William Ramsey – “Beyond all other cities in Asia Minor, it gives the traveler the impression of a *Royal City*, the home of authority, the rocky hill on which it stands is so huge, and dominates the broad plain of the Caicus so proudly and so boldly.”
  - e. Cultural Center

1. 2<sup>nd</sup> largest library in the world
  - a. Second only to Alexandria
2. Developed parchment for books
  - a. Egyptians wouldn't sell them papyrus reeds to make paper
  - b. Parchment from the skins of animals
  - c. Special process
  - b. "Sheepskin" at graduation

f. Religious center....v.13

1. Jesus referred to it as...
  - a. ***"where Satan has his throne"***
  - b. ***"where Satan lives"***
2. Satan had his grip on the city?
  - a. Worship of Zeus
    1. 800 feet up the conical hill
    2. On a projecting ledge of rock
    3. An altar 40 feet high
    4. Smoked all day from the sacrifices to Zeus
  - b. The worship of Asclepius
    1. The "God of healing"
    2. Pilgrims flocked to Pergamos to be healed

\*R.H. Clark has called Pergamos the  
"Lourdes of the Ancient World"

3. The emblem of Asclepius was the serpent
  4. Indiana Jones... “Snakes, I hate snakes”
  5. The temple was inhabited by serpents
  6. Pilgrims would sleep on the floor of the temple and let the serpents crawl over them
  7. “Healing power
- c. The center of Caesar worship
1. Yet the church had cut a deal
  2. They had compromised with the devil

### C. The Commendation (v.13)

1. A mixture of the faithful and the compromisers
  - a. “you” – the faithful
  - b. “those” – the compromisers
2. “***Yet you remain true to my name***”
  - a. Even though you live at the foot of Satan’s throne
  - b. You hold fast My name
    1. Do not deny the faith
    2. Even unto death (Antipas)
3. They got the doctrine of Jesus right
4. Despite the pagan ceremonies, some stood strong on ***His Name***
  - a. “His Name” symbolic of His deity
  - b. The biggest controversy during time of Constantine
5. Also true of this era in church history

- a. Got a lot of things wrong...but got Jesus right

## 6. The Arian Controversy

- a. Fought over at the Council of Nicea (A.D. 325)
- b. Arius & his followers denied the personal deity of our Savior
- c. Just like modern Jehovah's Witnesses

**1. "Christ was the greatest of all created beings, but not 'one with the Father'"**

2. Believe Jesus was created...thus not equal

- d. Emperor Constantine called and presided over Council
- e. H. A. Ironside in Lectures on the Book of Revelation:

During the council, feelings ran so high that Constantine had to intervene on several occasions. At one point, the brilliant Arius seemed almost to have stopped all opposition. ...when a hermit from the deserts of Africa sprang to his feet clad chiefly in tiger's skin. This latter he tore from his back, disclosing great scars (the result of having been thrown into the arena among the wild beasts). With his back dreadfully disfigured by animal claws exposed to their view, he dramatically cried, "These are the brand marks of the Lord Jesus Christ, and I cannot hear this blasphemy." Then he proceeded to give so stirring an address, setting forth clearly the truth as to Christ's eternal deity, that the majority of the council realized in a moment that it was indeed the voice of the Holy Spirit.

The final outcome of the Council of Nicea was that Jesus Christ was declared to be "very God of very God", perfection of perfection", and "God and man in one person".

Because this church held fast to Christ's name, the organized church did not teach anything but the personal deity of Jesus Christ for over a thousand years. Not until rationalism came in and produced nineteenth and twentieth century modernism could the Church be found guilty of a false doctrine regarding our Lord.

- 6. You can get a lot wrong in your theology; however, if you get this one right...you will be saved

## **D. The Concern (v.14-15)**

They got it right regarding Jesus, but they added a bunch of stuff

***1. They mixed pagan rituals with true Christianity***

***a. The Doctrine of Balaam*** (v.14)

1. Numbers 22 –31
2. Preparing to enter the Promised Land
3. Balak – King of Moab
  - b. Feared Israel
  - c. Offered \$\$ to Balaam if he would pronounce a curse on Israel
  - d. But blessings kept coming out
4. So Balaam came up with a plan
  - a. Compromise Israel
  - b. Get them to intermarry with the women of Moab (Numbers 25:1-3)
  - c. Polluted the people socially and spiritually
    1. Corrupted Israel
5. Added paganism to the truth
- b. The problem in Pergamos
  1. Mixed bad theology with good theology
- c. In Church History...after Constantine's edict
  1. All of the pagan priests became "Christians" (in name only)
  2. Added ...
    - a. Ritual of pagan temples

- b. The rosary
  - c. Celibacy of priests and nuns
  - d. Prayers for the dead
  - e. The sign of the cross
3. Later they added...
- a. Worship of saints
  - b. Worship of the Queen of Heaven
  - c. Mass
  - d. Pagan clerical garb for priests
  - e. Extreme unction
  - f. Purgatory introduced
  - g. Worship only in Latin
  - h. Prayers to Mary
4. The Church became less Christian and more Roman after 312 A.D.

***2. They replaced evangelism with institutionalism***

- a. The entire empire converted in name only
  - 1. Declared their culture to be Christian
- b. Even today, the people of Europe and America are listed as “Christian” as opposed to Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, or pagan
- c. The Church married the world
  - 1. *poly gamos*
    - a. *poly* = multiple
    - b. *gamos* = Marriage

2. *per gamos*

a. *per* = bad / mixed

b. *gamos* = marriage

d. Problem with churches today

1. All children are “automatic membership”

2. The Church of England

3. The Church of Grand Rapids

a. ***Cultural Christianity***

b. ***Institutionalizing vs. Evangelizing***

**3. *They added a layer of priest between God and man***

a. The “Nicolaitans” (v.15)

1. Very important to understand

2. Jesus twice mentions that He hates it

b. The name itself

1. Two Greek words

a. “nike”

1. The “swoosh”

2. Victory over

b. “laitans”

1. People

2. Laity from Laos

2. “victory over the laity”

- a. By leaders of the church
- b. They made the people go through them

3. Jesus twice said he hated it!

3. Summarized by Criswell (p. 134)

The rising up of a class separate, apart and exalted over the great mass of God's people. This class arrogated to themselves, above the people, the powers of life and of death. They had the power to forgive sins, to excommunicate, the power to damn in hell; they alone had the power to interpret and to mediate the Word and will of God. The doctrine of the Nicolaitans is the subjugation of the people. The Nicolaitans entered the political, imperial and governmental arena of the world. Both government and church became pawns in a game of political power, and the two are married together.

## **E. The Challenge (v. 16-17)**

1. "***Repent or else***".....v.16

2. Reward for those who overcome.....v.17

a. "***hidden manna***"

- 1. Visible manna is nourishment for the body
- 2. Hidden manna is nourishment for the spirit

b. "***the white stone***"

- 3. Diamond
- 4. A symbol of love and commitment

3. The "***overcomers***" will receive a "***new name***"

- 1. Adopted into the family of God
- 2. Who is the "Overcomer"?

\*those who believe in Jesus

## **IV. Summary**

### **A. Can Roman Catholics be saved?**

1. Yes, in that they have the right doctrine of Jesus Christ
  - a. Just like Pergamus
2. Yet they have added so much to it
  - a. Most get sidetracked
  - b. They add works to grace and nullify grace

## **B. How do we gain salvation?**

- a. What we don't need
  1. A bunch of rituals and sacraments
  2. A state religion
  3. The intercession of a priest
- b. What do we need to be saved?
  1. "Nothing but the blood of Jesus"