PERGAMUM CHURCH PERIOD
312 - 606 A.D.

The City in John’s Day

Pergamum was the capital city of the Roman province in Asia. It was almost 60 miles from Smyrna and 15 miles from the Aegean Sea and had little commerce. Pergamum was a center of learning, medicine, and religious books, boasting a library of 200,000 volumes. For this reason it became the home of many princes, priests, and scholars. Noted for marble carving, it was known for its architectural beauty. The city also was noted for its pagan religions and many heathen temples. Pergamum had magnificent statues of Zeus, Dionysus, and Athena. This city also embraced emperor worship.

In Revelation 2:13 it states:

"I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is ... where Satan dwells.”

According to John, the Believers in Pergamum dwelt where “Satan’s throne” had been set up. This Satanic “religious system” had been practiced in Babylon by Semiramis, the wife, or possibly the mother, of Nimrod; who is first mentioned in Genesis 10. Babylon was captured by the Persians in 539 B.C. At the time of the Babylonian capture by the Persians, Attalus III, the Priest-King of the Chaldean Hierarchy, fled before the conquering Persians to Pergamum. It was at this time Satan shifted his “seat” or “capital” to a new location — and, oh, what a move! From Babylon, Satan set up his operation in the center of learning and the healing arts; seeking to control peoples’ minds through learning, their bodies through healing, and their souls through pagan religion. Through the worship of Caesar, Zeus, Aesculapius, and other pseudo-gods, Satan firmly established himself throughout this city.

Just an added note: A medical school of Pergamum worshiped Aesculapius, the god of healing, a Babylonian pagan cult. Their symbol — a serpent twined around a staff. This well-known insignia symbol of the medical profession is still used today.

Pergamum was attacked by the Arabs in 716 - 717 A.D., this city lost its political power. It gradually fell into ruin and is now a scene of desolation.

The Pergamum Church Period in History

Satan learned from his attack on the Church, during the Smyrna Period, that persecution only causes the Church to flourish and continue in a perpetual state of revival. After Diocletian’s unsuccessful attack on the Church during his reign (284 - 305 A.D.), Constantine succeeded him as emperor. Constantine professed Christianity, but his goal was more political than religious. His desire was to meld together his Christian and Pagan subjects into one people, and so
consolidate his Empire. One government, one religion, one people — all socially minded alike — What a concept! To accomplish this he offered all kinds of inducements for worldly people to come into the Church, and granted special privileges upon the Church to accept his methods.

When Constantine became emperor of Rome, he became the supreme ruler of the Western world. As emperor, he issued an edict of toleration for Christianity and showered many favors on the Christian Church. The government provided money for the operation of the Church and many of the pagan temples, known as basilicas, were converted into places of worship. He also supplied magnificent vestments for the clergy, and soon the “bishop” found himself clad in costly attire, seated on a lofty throne in the apse of the basilica, with a marble altar, adorned with gold and gems, on a lower level in front of him. By 312 A.D., the Church during the Pergamum Period was now embracing the ordered “Government Religion of Christianity,” set up by Constantine.

But there was a price to pay for these privileges bestowed upon the Church, it is called “compromise.” And this is not a new tactic of Satan. For we see from Israel’s history that when Satan could not physically destroy the Israelites, he would try to destroy them through the union with ungodly neighbors, defiling them with idolatrous and immoral practices. This is about to repeat itself within the Church during the Pergamum Period. This is where we need to understand what the “Doctrine of Balaamism” means. To properly examine the doctrine, we need to be familiar with Numbers 22-31. Here is the story:

When the children of Israel, on their way to Canaan, had reached the land of Moab, Balak, the king of Moab, was afraid of the children of Israel as they were coming through his land. So he sent for Balaam, who lived at Pethor on the river Euphrates. Balak hired Balaam to use his gift of prophecy to produce a curse against Israel. Balaam sought to do this for the greed of profit and riches. He tried every means at his disposal to do so; however, he encountered a major problem: Yehovah was with Israel! Every time Balaam opened his mouth to curse them, out came a blessing. Finally in desperation, he gave Balak, the king, the suggestion of enticing the Israelites to make an unholy alliance with the Moabites through intermarriage with them; thus we find fulfilled what is referred to in Revelation 2:14: “... Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality.” At Balaam’s suggestion, the Israelites intermarried with the Moabites, contrary to the will of Yehovah. Thus the people were polluted socially and spiritually. The “Doctrine of Balaamism” simply put is the intermingling of Yehovah’s people with the ways of the world. More less think of it as a marriage bond between holy and unholy, being unequally yoked.

For the first 300 years of Church history, its way of worship was a form of Judaism. Constantine, in order to please the pagan members of the Church, and also attract more pagans into the Church, began to merge the pagan worship of his upbringing with the pure worship of the Believers, with little alteration. Here comes the compromise. In order to please the emperor — and why not — Constantine was presenting money, buildings, and lavishing gift upon gifts to the Church — the leaders within the Church went ahead and adopted these customs that were
parallel to pagan practices; which became a marriage of Church and Government. Once the Church entered into a union with the Government, she became guilty of spiritual fornication or “Balaamism.” The “Government Religion” may have been called “Christianity,” but its practices in worship were definitely of pagan origin.

What Constantine introduced during his rule is still practiced within the Church to this day. To give example of what occurred, he took the “pagan days and festivals” of his ingrained upbringing and merged them with the “Sabbaths and Feast days” of Israel. Below are listed some of the major “Balaamistic” changes made by Constantine, still in practice today:

- **Sunday**, the first day of the week, was the weekly worship of the Babylonian sun-god.
- Sabbath day, being the seventh day of the week, was moved to the first day of the week.
- Birthday of the sun-god is celebrated on December 25.
- Birthday of the Son of Yehovah was established to be celebrated on December 25.
- Spring festival for the goddess of fertility, Ishtar (a.k.a. Astarte, East Star, Easter), is observed with its elements; such as: the egg, new costumes, and is celebrated the Sunday following the Spring Equinox.
- The annual celebration of our Messiah’s resurrection is commemorated with an egg-laying rabbit, new clothes, and is also celebrated the Sunday following the Spring equinox. His resurrection is now called “Easter” and is not remembered by its correct fulfilment of the third calendar Feast: “Feast of First Fruits.”

In 325 A.D. The “First Great Council of the Church” was held. The council upheld the supremacy of “Clergy” over the “Laity” (common people) and secured a strong and permanent foothold. This is known as the “Doctrine of the Nicolaitans;” which had its beginnings during the Church period of Ephesus (30 -100 A.D.)

What was a deed in the Ephesus Period became a doctrine in the Pergamum Period, fulfilling Revelation 2:15, “Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.”

It was during this period that “Post-Millennial” views had its origin. As the Church became rich and powerful, it suggested that by the union of Church and Government a condition of affairs would develop that would usher in the Millennium without the return of Messiah; more or less, that we human beings could bring about a perfect kingdom by ourselves. This doctrine taught that Messiah would come at the end of a perfect thousand-year kingdom, run by human beings. Since some scriptural support was needed for such a doctrine, it was claimed that Israel had been cast away forever and that the intended prophecies of Israel’s future glory were now intended for the Church.
The influence of paganism on the Church increased over the years step by step. The Church began to shroud itself in “mystery” and ritualism that had a strong resemblance to the Babylonian mysticism. The Chaldean tau, which was the elevation of a large “T” on the end of a pole, was changed to the sign of a cross. The rosary of pagan origin was introduced. Celibacy of priests and nuns, which has no scriptural verification but finds a counterpart in the vestal virgins of paganism, was conceived.

The following is a partial list of unscriptural changes introduced during this Period. Gradually these changes became more prominent than the original teachings of Christianity.

Practices introduced during the Pergamum Church years of 312 - 606 A.D.:

- Prayers for the dead
- Making sign of the cross
- Worship of saints
- Worship of angels
- Mass first instituted
- Worship of Mary begun
- Priests began dressing differently than laypeople
- Extreme use of anointing oils used for rites of consecration or healing
- Doctrine of purgatory introduced
- Worship services conducted in Latin
- Prayers directed to Mary

The Roman Catholic Church of today is hard put to trace its ancestry beyond 312 A.D. Until that time, the “Ekklesia,” a Greek word for, “the Called Out Ones,” were an independent collection of local congregations, working together whenever possible, but not dominated by central authority. As the Church became married to governmental authority and elevated to a place of acceptance, it began its declined in spiritual blessing and power.

It is necessary to understand that at this time in history there was only one Church, made up of the collection of many congregations within the Roman Empire; not like today where there are many different denominations and churches within the Church across the entire world. One Church and one Church only, known as the Universal Church. It is from the Latin word, Catholic, that we get the English word, Universal, when translated.

The Pergamum Period extends from the time the Church consented to Constantine’s plans for a unified government in 312 to 606 A.D., when Boniface III was crowned “Universal Bishop.” What I see here is a time span of nearly 300 years to totally saturate the pagan ways of worship into the people. If born into the third generation or after, the Church would have no idea how far “true worship” had strayed, or how paganistic it had become. By the end of the Pergamum Period, the practices were now accepted as “holy.” And today, the Church is still no better off in understanding these things than those born into the third generation or after.
But there is a solution to correct this error, and it is given at the beginning of this letter to those in Pergamum.

Messiah’s Character Revealed

Rev 2:12
12 These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword:

Also, we read in Hebrews:

Heb 4:12
12 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword ...

We have previously seen that Messiah selects one of the aspects of His nature, as revealed to John in his vision of Chapter 1, and then presents this one nature to each individual Church. To Pergamum He reveals “the sharp two-edged sword,” which, without question, refers to the Word of God. The cure for the problems of the local church at Pergamum of John’s day, and that of the Pergamum Period of the Church; or for that matter any congregation or person today, is the Word of God.

So the solution for us today is to be grounded in His Word. Listening with our spiritual ears and putting every detail of Scripture into our spiritual heart. Knowing first of all that true worship begins with loving Yehovah — and Yehovah alone — with ALL our heart, mind, soul, and strength!

Messiah to the Church of Pergamum

Messiah commends the Church of Pergamum for the works of those who stay faithful in the midst of such evil. He condemns the Church for its “marriage” to the world through the practices of Balaamism and the Nicolaitans. The Ekklesia (Church), which houses the Bride of Messiah, should not be unequally yoked with the dark works of these world systems. Messiah counsels the Ekklesia to repent through acknowledging these sins, confessing these sins, and changing their conduct away from these sins. He cannot and will not tolerate compromise within the “Called Out Ones” concerning its marriage to the world.

Compromise by the Church in the Pergamum Period is signified by allowing the world’s standard and practices to be brought into the Church in order to appease, agree, and concede with the world’s values. By doing so, it alleviates division and separation within our societies of social standards. Be on your guard, even today, not to compromise your beliefs to a world that calls evil good and good evil. We are counseled by “He who has the sharp two-edged sword” to stay faithful in the midst of such evil. This can be done by knowing the Word of God.

Rereading the judgment against the Church of Pergamum:
Rev 2:16
16 Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.

It is up against the Word of God that this Church will be held accountable for its actions. In other words, do their deeds and practices align with His word? This will be the judgment of this Church Period for their introduction of Satan’s ways, then calling those ways, “holy.”

Promises Are Given to Those of Pergamum

Rev 2:17 "... To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it."

Manna was the heavenly food sent by Yehovah to the children of Israel in the desert. It typifies the spiritual food provided by Yehovah in His Word. It should be clearly understood that this is an individual feeding, not a church function. Just as the Israelites had to go individually and gather the manna in the desert, so the child of Yehovah in the Pergamum Church Period, or in any Church Period, is dependent on Yehovah for their individual spiritual supply.

The symbolic meaning of the white stone is not as easy to determine as the hidden manna. Bible commentators are not agreed on this subject, though there is a basic tone of agreement — that of assurance. White in the Bible refers to the righteousness of Yehovah. In this connection, there is an ancient custom as being the key that unlocks the meaning of this stone. It seems that in ancient times a white stone meant acquittal. For example, if a man had been tried by a court, the jurors published their vote on his case by laying down a white stone, signifying that they were acquitting him of the crime. This would certainly be in accord with many other passages of Scripture that indicate that Messiah has given an acquittal to the child of Yehovah who has called on Him for forgiveness and salvation. The big difference, of course, is that we ARE guilty. Nevertheless, because Messiah died in our place for our sins, we receive the white stone of acquittal with a name on it that is yet unknown to us. The white stone, then, stands as a beautiful symbol of the eternal acquittal we gain through faith in Yeshua HaMashiach.

And finally, Messiah says to all the Church:

Rev 2:17 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."
Added Notes:

These are some added thoughts of my own. In putting together the collective thoughts of other writers, I came across something worth noting. From Israel My Glory, it says that the name Pergamum means parchment, a type of paper. Pointing to the information that “Pergamum was a center of learning, medicine, and religious books, boasting a library of 200,000 volumes.” In both, Clarence Larkin and Tim Lahaye’s writings, they state that Pergamum means “marriage.” Pointing to the fact that this Church became married to the world systems and standards of pagan practices. I am sure that all writers have done their own research for findings, but none tell where they found their word meanings.

The Strong’s Concordance says that the word Pergamum has its root meaning from the word, “tower.” I find this to be very significant. It has already been addressed that Pergamum was Satan’s seat, where his throne was at the time of John’s writings. And we are also aware of the story in Genesis 11 concerning the “tower of Babel,” in the land of Babylon where Satan’s first throne dwelled and existed. What is seen from my own reasoning of the “tower of Babel” and Pergamum, which means “tower,” is that Satan moved his “self-elevated” tower from one position on the face of the Earth to another place of elevation or “tower.” Then to go one step further, the words “Babylon” and “Babel” come from the same root word, “confusion.” Confusion means to confound, muddle, complicate, entangle, mystify, and cause chaos. Is that not exactly what we have seen introduced in this particular Church Period? Entangling true worship by mingling the practices of the dark spiritual world! This diabolical deed has certainly caused confusion and muddled worshipful practices. I feel comfortable to give this interpretation along with these other Bible commentators.

Babylonian/Greek Cults:

This is what I perceive as the difference of Babylonian cult and Greek cult. From my own opinion, the Babylonian cult promotes the worship of pseudo-gods; the Greek cult promotes the worship of mythological-gods. Both cults practiced worship in astrology, meaning the worship of the sun, moon, planets, and stars.

By clearly understanding the foundation of these abominable worship practices, it allows us to see how their influence has been integrating into Judeo-Christian worship.