① INTRO AND SELF IDENTIFICATION

v.12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamos/Pergamum:

- The road north of Smyrna leads to Pergamos
- Roughly 40 miles up, then ten miles inland
- The 7 churches seem to follow a typical "U" shaped postal route
- Pergamos was an impressive capital city of the area
  - think Sacramento... laws are made there (Pergamos) to
  - honor Rome / Caesar
  - ★ hence, where Satan (the adversary/opponent) throne is
  - Remember, as explained to Smyrna, "Satan" and the "Devil" (Adversary / accuser respectively) typically apply to people/groups

Pliny the Elder (A Roman scholar, author, and Senator) who lived in Pergamos, said, "Pergamos is by far the most distinguished city in Asia" (dignified)

★ Smyrna was less sophisticated, but more brutal to Christians

★ Pergamos was orderly and made the laws

Pliny and his nephew (Pliny the younger) executed many Christians OR Gave Christians a "TEST" to prove their apostasy

Hebrews 11 mentions those who chose rather to suffer and "did not accept deliverance" Heb 11:35

- Pergamos had many libraries, a Citadel/Tower, and Royal buildings

- The city had many altars to Greek Gods, like Zeus and was
  - the center of worship for the 4 most important Pagan cults: Zeus, Athena, Dionysos, & Asklepios
  - Asklepios was designated the "Savior" and had a Shrine as the God of Healing...
  - Known as the "Pergamene God"

v.12 write: The words of Him who has the sharp two-edged sword

Q: why was this church to focus on this aspect of the "Vision"-Chr

A: probably because Jesus comes as a "sword to divide" Matt 10:34

- and Pergamos was guilty of compromise and assimilating all too well w/ their surroundings
- ★ exact opposite problem of Ephesus
- This church wasn't dividing properly from Pergamos' idolatry
- If they do not repent and fight the good fight of faith...
  - then the "SWORD" will turn on them & fight against them" 2:16
- Christians need to stand strong on the side of Christ...
  - even when they are where the Adversary (Satan) dwells 2:13
  - To not fight for Christ and advance His Kingdom is to fight against Him

"He who is not with Me is against Me and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad" Matt. 12:30

② JESUS' COMMENDATIONS TO PERGAMOS

v. I know your works; where you dwell, where Satan's throne is...

- Jesus is fully aware of how hard it is to shine in Pergamos
- He knows it's a center of adversaries and opponents
- There is severe persecution

★ Those who take Revelation literally would conclude that the Spiritual being "Satan" lives in Pergamum

- even having a "throne" there
- however, almost all scholars would disagree w/ literalness here

★ more likely, Jesus is saying that He knows Pergamos is a prominent place of Pagan worship AND Roman Emperor worship

- As Rome became a center/throne of Satanic activity in the West...
- Pergamos became the center/throne of Satanic activity in the EAST.
- much like the Christians of Smyrna, open witnessing = open persecution
- Smyrna had a "synagogue of Satan" 2:9 to contend with AND...
- Pergamos battled "Satan's throne" 2:13

- Although this was very difficult, Pergamos was overall holding fast!

v.13 And you hold fast to My name & did not deny My faith...

- in other words, you continue to openly "witness" and do not "Deny" being Christians
  - they were willing to witness to Pergamos
  - Again, opposite of Ephesus
  - they would witness/evangelize, even despite martyrdom... which occurred

v.13 Even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr was killed

ΠΙΣΤΟΣ μάρτυς

Believing/faithful witness/martyr

- This is the exact same Greek description of Jesus in 1:5

"Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the ΠΙΣΤΟΣ μάρτυς firstborn (pre-eminent) from the dead, and ruler over the kings of the earth" 1:5

★ Antipas is associated and identified with Jesus Himself

- Despite all the dangers, this church held fast to witnessing

v.13 who was killed among you, where Satan dwells

- again they are reminded they are witnessing and living where ΣΑΤΑΝΑΣ (Adversary) dwells (resides)
- Antipas is mentioned by Tertullian (christian writer 160-220) as being "slowly roasted to death in a brazen bowl during the reign of Domitian"
- Interesting to note that Yahweh has always asked His people to be a witness to the world...

To Israel, God says through Isaiah: "You are My witnesses," says the LORD and My servant... you may know and believe and understand, I Am He... I have declared and saved and proclaimed... therefore you are My witnesses that I am God" Is. 43:10

★ Jesus said "The Helper will come and will testify of Me (through you) and you will bear witness of Me..." John 15:26-27

③ JESUS' CONDEMNATIONS TO PERGAMOS

v.14 But I have a few things against you:

- This will be the greatest rebuke so far of the churches mentioned
  - Ephesus had "one thing against them"
  - Smyrna had no condemnations

v.14 You have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before Israel...

- the church at Pergamos is indicted for harboring a group of "compromisers."
- The church was "identifying" too much w/ the pagan city
- This compromise is explained through how Israel compromised w/ Balaam and the Midianites
- As the story in Numbers is explained:
  - Balak saw Israel approaching
  - Balak hired Balaam to curse Israel
  - Even along the way, an angel w/ stood Balaam & his donkey
  - Balaam was unable to curse Israel despite wanting to for money
  - Balaam came up w/ an idea...
  - although he couldn't "curse" Israel, he "taught" Balak, King of Moab and the Midianites how to stumble Israel... Numb. 22-25

★ Balaam taught Balak to send women to Israel to seduce them, bring in their Gods, and have Israel fellowship (eat sacrificed meals to Median God's) w/ these women

- Solomon fell to the same trickery...
- So too is the church at Pergamos
- These "False Teachers" were teaching those in the church that it was okay to have close relationships w/ the people & way of Pergamos (eating, unity, sexual imm. etc.)

★ That is what the next part implies:

v.14 so they (the Christians) might eat food sacrificed to idols

- become okay w/ their religion

v.14 and practice sexual immorality

- become okay w/ immodesty, lewdness, fornication, adultery, etc.

★ This will be the same indictment and rebuke against Thyatira

"Nevertheless, I have a few things against you because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and to eat things sacrificed to idols." 2:20

- In both cases, the charge is:

ΠΟΡΝΕΥΩ: various kinds of sexual immorality

- Balaam and Jezebel are metaphors for the sins of Israel... now also facing the churches
- Refusal to participate and/or compromise often resulted in increased persecution and economic and social ostracism as well
- 1 Pet 3:11-21 speaks of this in Galatia
- Just as Balaam "taught" Balak, so too, these people were teaching Christians that is okay to participate in feasts, parties, and events of the ways of Pergamos

★ The cure for Israel is similar to the cure for the church in Pergamos

- To stop the plague in Israel, Moses must get rid of the transgressors AND the Leaders who taught such things Numb. 31

(they even killed Balaam as well)

- The leaders at Pergamos must cut off these "teachers" / leaders and those who follow their teachings

★ Balaam is a prototype of False Teachers and the church needs to be aware of them and keep them out!

- also worth noting... in the Book of Revelation, ΠΟΡΝΕΥΩ (sexual immorality) can be literal or metaphorical... spiritual adultery
- In fact, out of 17 times, 13 of the uses of ΠΟΡΝΕΥΩ is spiritual (NOT committing adultery by riding the beast)
- this verse, 2:14, is most likely literal and refering to Pagan feasts

v.15 Thus, you also have those who hold the doctrine/teachings of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate

- This was the doctrine that the church of Ephesus was commended for not allowing in their church.
- The structure of this verse "you also have" or "in the same manner" could indicate that the Nicolaitans had similar teachings to the Balaam group
- Both groups teaching Antinomianism (against laws)
- Christians are free from many laws due to the release of grace
- The church at Pergamus was too lax to discipline its church members
- internal sin and immorality was spreading & God's people are suffering
- Jesus is telling them to cease such involvement and to repent

v.16 Repent, OR else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth

- This "coming" is a spiritual coming of Judgment to the church
  - Just as Jesus explained how He would spiritually come to Judge Israel w/in a generation Matt 24
  - And just as God said He would come w/ clouds to judge Egypt Is. 19:1

★ Also, we will see this metaphor of judging w/ the sword again in a later vision:

Christ will be on a white horse "He who sat on him was called Faithful and True... His name is called the Word of God... out of His mouth went a sharp sword and with it, He would strike the nations and would rule w/a rod of iron... He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords..." Rev. 19:11-15

The sword imagery continues:

"And the rest were killed w/ the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on a horse" Rev. 19:21

- notice the beautiful metaphor through... Jesus' weapon and ours (Eph. 6) is the Word of God

★ NOT Literal weapons, but spiritual weapons (2 Cor. 10) for a spiritual war

Yet, some will still take Rev. 19 Literally and that Jesus will physically rule w/ a sword and a rod of iron

★ Notice as well, that Jesus will be fair and fight against "them"... NOT all the church but those guilty of teaching heresy and those following it ... and those in the church refusing to discipline them

④ JESUS' PROMISE to the OVERCOMERS

v.17 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches

- Again, Is. 6 imagery
- hard ♡ = deafness / Blindness
- Soft ♡ = hear / see

v.17 To him who overcomes ΝΙΚΑΩ

- interesting as the word Nicolaitans means:

ΝΙΚΟΛΑΙΤΩΝ: those who overcome other people

- Jesus has a promise for those who were trying to overcome them
- The next part of the verse mentions 3 promises to the overcomers...
- all metaphorical w/ Beautiful O.T. symbolism

★ Yet all 3 metaphors have similar meanings:

- to fellowship w/ God
- To be forgiven, clean, & invited
- To Belong to God, be His possession

★ all equal Heavenly entrance

v.17 I will give some of the hidden manna to eat

- since the overcomers chose not to eat meat sacrificed to idols...
- They get to eat/fellowship with Jesus

- The idea that it is "hidden" means could imply it is spiritual, not literal

v.17 And I will give him (the overcomer) a white stone

- many possibilities to its meaning:
  - a white stone was used by a judge to show innocence
  - or when groups would "cast votes"
  - white stones meant acquittal
  - while a black stone meant guilty
- a white stone was given to guests w/ a pass of admission to special occassions
  - this idea could relate well to an invitation to the marriage ceremony (which is mentioned in Rev. 19:9)
- also interesting that the manna was described as "white bdellium stones" Ex. 16:31, Numb 11:7
- overall, in the book of Revelation, white stands for clean, forgiven, OR having the victory (white horse, white garments, white stones, etc)

v.17 and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it

- to write a name OR new name on something OR someone
  - Typically means you own/possess it...

★ Like naming your child

- You pick the name, he/she belongs exclusively to you

- The letter to the church of Philadelphia actually reveals the name:

"He who overcomes... I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name" Rev. 3:12

- also, another vision in Revelation speaks of God's name on Believers foreheads...

"I looked, and Behold, A Lamb standing on Mount Zion and w/ Him 144,000 having His Father's name written on their foreheads..." Rev. 14:2

- They sang a new song
- They were not defiled w/ women
- They follow the Lamb wherever He goes Rev. 14:3-4

- ALL this imagery of God's name simply implies who they belong to.
- The fact that "no one knows the name" in 2:17
- Yet is revealed in 3:12

Follows the same structure of the vision of Christ on the white horse in which...

"He had a name written that no one knew except Himself" 19:12

- then immediately revealed in the next verse:

"His name is called the Word of God" 19:13

"and on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD of LORDS" Rev. 19:16

- Believers... the overcomers receive Christ's name to indicate their identity w/ Him
  - Just like Antipas was called The Faithful martyr... Just like Jesus...
  - We have become one w/ Him

"I pray for all those who will believe in Me through their word, that they may all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they may be one in Us..." John 17:20-21

★ This High priestly prayer Fulfilled in the overcomers!!