



MYSTERIES OF THE BIBLE (Part 11)

“The Mystery of the Seven Stars & Golden Lampstands”

“The Mystery of the Church at PERGAMOS!”

Go for God!

A “mystery” in Scripture is a previously hidden truth now divinely revealed. Within the *Mysteries of the Bible* we find the “***The Mystery of the Seven Stars & Golden Lampstands***” found in **Revelation 1:20** - ***The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.***

- Each of these seven churches can be framed with historical reference:

(2:1-7) *Ephesus*- The Apostolic Church (1st Century)

(2:8-11) *Smyrna*- The Martyr Church (A.D. 100 – A.D. 314)

(2:12-17) Pergamum - The Worldly Church (A.D. 314 – A.D. 590)

(2:18-29) *Thyatira*- Church of the Dark Ages, “Romanism” (A.D. 590 – A.D. 1000- continues today)

(3:1-6) *Sardis*- The Protestant Church, “Reformation” (A.D. 1517 – A.D. 1800)

(3:7-13) *Philadelphia*- The Revived Church (A.D. 1800 to Rapture)

(3:14-22) *Laodicea*- The Apostate Church (Last Days & into the Great Tribulation)

(2:12-17) The Church of Pergamos - “The Worldly Church” (A.D. 314 – 590)

- History of Pergamos – The city of Pergamos is commonly called Pergamum. Pergamum was approximately 100 miles north of Ephesus, with Smyrna located about halfway in between. Unlike Ephesus and Smyrna, Pergamum was not a port city, but was located about fifteen miles inland from the Aegean Sea. Nor was it on any of the major trade routes. Yet, as its ancient capital, Pergamum was considered Asia’s greatest city. The Roman writer Pliny called it “by far the most distinguished city in Asia.” The physician Galen, second only in prominence to Hippocrates, was born and studied in Pergamum. Pergamum survives today as the Turkish city of Bergama.

The city was one of three royal cities in Turkey within the Roman Empire. **These royal cities were Smyrna the great commercial center. Ephesus the great political center, and Pergamum the great religious center.** The Pergamum religious center could be called “paganism unlimited.” The name Pergamos means “married,” so the question arises, was this church married to Rome (the world), or married to Christ?

There was a temple built to Caesar Augustus in 29 B.C., which established Pergamum as a royal city. Augustus would stay in this city when the weather became cold in Rome. There was a healing spa there and it was a fortified city built to withstand the enemy. Pergamum was built on a mountain, and the acropolis dominated the whole region of the road plain of the Caicus.

Pergamum was a boast of great temples. There was massive altar to Zeus, a temple to the goddess Athena. There was a temple to Dionysius, which is the same as Bacchus, the god of wine and alcohol, the goat-god. There was also a temple for healing known as the Aklepios. This symbolism was a serpent on a pole.

Not only did Pergamum boast great temples, but it also had the greatest library of the pagan world. It was a library of over two hundred thousand volumes. In fact, the city got its name from the parchment (pergamena), which was used. This great library was that which Mark Antony gave to his girlfriend, Cleopatra. She lugged it off to Alexandria in Egypt, and that library was considered the greatest library the world has ever seen—and it originally came from Pergamum.

(v12) Jesus the COMMANDER has a sharp two-edged sword – A sword is an offensive weapon against an enemy, cutting on the way in and the way out. The Bible refers to the “*Word of God*” as the “*sword of the Spirit*” in Ephesians 6:17.

- Let's read and understand Hebrews 4:12-13 - *For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.*

(v13) First, Jesus commends them for their COURAGE!

- Three observations:

(1) these Christians had *good works*;

(2) *Where Satan's throne is* - Where Satan has his throne—where he reigns as king and is universally obeyed. *This passage refers to the "mystery cults" of Babylon that set up their headquarters in Pergamos. It also includes the emperor worship that played a key role in this heathen city.* It was a maxim among the Jews, that where the law of God was not studied, there Satan dwelt; but he was obliged to leave the place where a synagogue or academy was established.

(3) they held fast to *the name of Jesus Christ*;

(4) they *would not deny the faith*;

(5) they were faithful even in times of *persecution (Antipas, the faithful martyr)*.

(v14-15) Jesus then corrects their CORRUPTION!

- Warren Wiersbe gives insight to Satan's strategies against the Church at Pergamos, “Despite their courageous stand against persecution, the believers in Pergamos were not faultless before the Lord. Satan had not been able to destroy them by coming as the roaring lion (1 Peter 5:8), but he was making inroads as the deceiving serpent. A group of compromising people had infiltrated the church fellowship, and Jesus Christ hated their doctrines and their practices.”

- Two false doctrines are listed:

#1 - The Doctrine of Balaam – This doctrine is found in the Old Testament Numbers chapter 22 - 25.

C.I. Scofield writes, “Balaam the prophet taught the wicked king Balak to corrupt the people of Israel by tempting them to marry women of Moab, defile their separation unto God, and abandon their pilgrim character. It is that union of the world and the church which creates spiritual unchastity, (James 4:4-5 - *Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.*). Pergamos had lost the pilgrim character and was living where Satan's throne was, in the world.” Not only did Balaam promote idolatry, but he also encouraged sexual immorality,

- Let's read the “way of Balaam” in 2 Peter 2:12-22.

#2 - *The Doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate* – This false teaching is very intriguing, Nicolaitans is broken down into Greek as – *Nikao*, “to conquer”, and *laos*, “the people” or “laity”; a first century sect which anticipated Rome’s priesthood by dividing God’s people into an unscriptural clergy—laity relationship.

- One commentator writes, “Pergamos is seen as representing the imperial church after Constantine (A.D. 313-606), wherein the church ceased to be officially persecuted and obtained access to the portals for political power. Pergamos, it is alleged, means **“married to power.”** It was during this time that the institution of the papacy had its inception. In 313, the *Decree of Coronation* made Rome (“where Satan’s throne is”) the center of Christendom. Like Israel in the days of Balaam, the church of this period was being seduced into immorality and the worship of idols through the rise of the papal system. Some who take this approach have suggested that *Antipas* does not refer to an individual, but to a class of men opposed (*anti*) to the popes (“papas”), which men were martyred in great numbers in Rome and Constantinople, Christ threatens to fight this institution with the sword out of His mouth—e.g., His Word.”

(v16-17) Christ tells Pergamos to CONQUER these false doctrines with truth – “Repent” – Change your ways and return to the truth of God’s Word! If they don’t ***repent***, they will face the ***sword of His mouth*** (Rev. 19:11-16).

- **If they overcome, they will partake of the “hidden manna”** - This was the special food God provided in the wilderness (Ex. Ch. 16). Jesus said, *"I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven . . . As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me."* (John 6:48-51, 57).

- **And if they overcome, they will receive a “white stone”** – There was a Roman custom of awarding white stones to the victor in athletic contests inscribed with the athlete’s name. This award served as his ticket to a special awards banquet. In this view, Christ promises the overcomers entrance to the eternal victory celebration in heaven!

Let’s be overcomers, AMEN! - 2 Timothy 2:15 - *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*