

Letters Week 3 Study Guide

Letter to Pergamum

1- On Sunday, we walked through the letter to the church in Pergamum. What do you remember most from Sunday's message?

2- Read through the details of Pergamum's culture:

- It was a capital city of Asia for over 300 years
- Held a famous international library with over 200,000 books
- Had a temple for worshipping Asclepius (god of healing)
- Had a famous medical school within temple to Asclepius
- A gigantic temple & altar to Zeus
- Caesar worship was most intense in Pergamum

How does our culture in the United States compare and contrast with Pergamum's culture?

3- Read Revelation 2:12 & Revelation 1:16. What is Jesus emphasizing with the double edged sword?

4- Read Revelation 2:13. Why do you think that Pergamum is being described as 'where Satan's throne is'? What is Jesus commending the church in Pergamum's for?

5- In order to fully understand the rest of the letter to Pergamum, its important to remember the story of Balaam & Balak. If you have plenty of time, read Numbers 22-25:13 & Numbers 31:1-18. If you're pressed with time, you can use the following paraphrase of the story:

Before the Israelites entered the Promised Land, they camped in the plains of the surrounding wilderness areas. The kings of the evil nations who inhabited the Promised Land (and surrounding areas) were terrified of the Israelites. So Balak - the king of Moab - decided to hire a prophet named Balaam to speak a curse over the nation of Israel. It was believed that Balaam had a spiritual gift of using his words to speak a blessing or a curse over people. Balaam directed Balak & his soldiers to offer 7 rams and 7 bulls in a sacrifice to the LORD. After doing this, Balaam tried to speak a curse over the Israelites...but when he opened his mouth...Balaam could only speak a blessing. Although Balak was angry, they decided to offer more sacrifices to the LORD and then have Balaam try to curse them again. Once again, Balaam was only able to speak a blessing over the Israelites. So they tried this religious ritual again...and Balaam blessed the Israelites for a third time. So Balak sent Balaam home since he couldn't fulfill his job. But before leaving, Balaam encouraged Balak to send Moabite women to tempt the Israelites through sexual immorality and idolatry. Sadly, this worked, and the Israelites angered the LORD and brought His wrath upon their community. This tragic story teaches us that if Satan cannot get us to deny our faith, he often attacks us in more subtle ways...through temptation.

What are some similar ways that you can see Satan at work in our culture?

6- Read Revelation 2:14-15. What does Jesus hold against the church in Pergamum?

7- Read Revelation 2:16 & Hebrews 4:12. How do these verses relate to each other? When is the last time that you have experienced the power of God's Word?

8- Read Revelation 2:17. The first promise that Jesus offers is that He will give some of 'the hidden manna'. In John chapter 6, Jesus is being approached by the crowd that He miraculously fed and He discusses the topic of manna. Read John 6:30-35. How might these verses play into Christ's promise in Revelation 2:17?

9- The second promise offered in Revelation 2:17 is a white stone with a new name on it. The color white represented purity & the Greek term that John uses for 'new' means 'renewed/refreshed'. How would this promise bring encouragement to the Christians in Pergamum? How can this promise encourage us today?

10- What are some ways that the letter to Pergamum relates to your life today? How are you challenged? How are you strengthened?

11- Close your time in prayer. Use your answer to the previous question (#10) to guide your prayer time.