



the Seven Churches *of* Revelation

Seven Churches of Revelation

Seven Churches – Pergamos

Church of Pergamos

Ancient History

Located in northwestern Turkey, Pergamon was a prominent capital city during the Hellenistic period from 281 to 133 BCE. The city-state was Romanized in 88 BCE, losing political independence and cultural freedom under Roman standardization. Over time, the city gained favor with Rome and was designated a temple city to honor the ruling emperor, including the creation of cults to honor the imperial family.

The original structure of an altar, built as a centerpiece of the celebratory victories of the Greek gods, was a notable architectural feature in the city of Pergamos. The Great Altar, dedicated to Zeus and Athena, represented the Greek mythological influence on world culture.

20th Century History

The Great Altar of Zeus was discovered in northwest Turkey (Pergamon) in 1878. Excavation continued through the following year. The Ottoman government agreed to sell its one-third share of the ruins to the German Berlin Antiquities Collection. The recovered ruins depicting scenes from the Altar frieze celebrated in ancient Greek culture were transported to Berlin while excavation continued. Some featured items were temporarily displayed in the German Altes Museum.

In 1901, the first German Museum, which was expected to house the Zeus Altar, was built, but it was too small to host the display. In 1908, the original structure was demolished, and construction of a new edifice began two years later. Considered a masterpiece of the Hellenistic Age, the ancient Greek altar structure was shipped to Berlin in 1910. Taking its name relative to its main attraction, the altar of Zeus in ancient Pergamon [in present-day Turkey], the Pergamon Museum was completed between 1910 and 1930.

World War I would interrupt further plans, delaying the reopening until 1930. After opening for nine years, the second World War (1939-1945) would force its closing again. Albert Speer, a Nazi architect, began construction of a grandstand in 1935 at the old Zeppelin airfield in Nuremberg, hoping the space would meet the dimensions needed to host the Great Altar. Nuremberg had been predicted as a place to annually celebrate the victory of Hitler and Nazi Germany. The depictions of the Titans of men fighting against mythical gods would enhance the imagery of Hitler as a God among men. In the fifth rally of the Reich Party Congress in 1933, held in Nuremberg, Hitler made his great prediction and declaration. The illustration below shows the structure completed in 1938.



After World War II, the National Museums of Berlin retrieved parts of the original frieze that had been appropriated as war booty. Items in custody at the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, Russia, were returned to the museum in 1958. The Altar frieze itself was completely restored between 1996 and 2004. Cement additions and rusted dowels were replaced, and the frieze was partially reconfigured. The museum exhibit was closed for further restoration in 2014 and remains closed for more extensive refurbishment, which is expected to be completed by 2027 or later.



Berlin, Germany (disassembled from its origin in Pergamos and transferred to Germany -19th Century Rome)

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Altar of Zeus “Satan’s Seat”



Battle of Mt. Olympus (Giants against the Gods) Alcyoneus /Athena /Gaia/ *Nike (Greek goddess of victory)



Battle of Mt. Olympus (Giants against the Gods) Zeus /Athena /Gaia/ *Nike (Greek goddess of victory)

Lesson Three

The Revelation Message:

Rev 2:12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;

Rev 2:13 I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, *even* where Satan's seat *is*: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas *was* my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

Rev 2:14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

Rev 2:15 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.

Rev 2:16 Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

Rev 2:17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth *it*.

(Revelation 2:12) - The letter to Smyrna opens with an affirmation of the author, the one with: "*the sharp sword*" with two edges. The resurrected Christ possesses a sharp (piercing) double-edged sword. In chapter one, He is first presented with that sword coming from His mouth, indicating that His words have the power to sharply pierce like a double-edged sword, cutting as the word enters and again as it exits.

The word enters the heart and mind, piercing through all other thoughts, desires, and obstructions. God's word has the piercing power to penetrate. How deep and how effective is still determined by the host subject on the receiving end. God's word cannot force a response or reaction, but it is impossible for anyone to claim the word cannot get in. Rejecting the word that penetrates the heart is a choice, and that choice is often a response.

Even when the rejected word exits, it pierces again, creating conviction after rejection. A second opportunity to make a choice.

Revelation 19:21 explains what happens when the word of God comes a final time to judge with sword in His mouth. The double-edged sword will slay the remnant that has rejected His truth.

(Revelation 2:13) - "I know thy works and *where thou dwellest*". The first part of the assessment is familiar, as it has been used in the previous letters. The resurrected Christ, and Son of Man (judge of all humanity), knows the work of the Church, which represents the demonstrated activity performed by the local assembly. Church work is what is externally visible; however, there is a greater concern to examine the internal condition of the Church.

Looking deeper, the second part of the assessment reveals that God knows where the people " *dwell*". The word usage is important to the passage. The Greek word dwell has two parts, "*kata – oikeo*". As a prefix the Greek word "*kata*" means "fully". The suffix word, "*oikeo*" means residence or dwelling. The two words combined in this passage express that God knows where the Church members fully reside, implying where they live spiritually. The metaphor reveals that the people reside under the dominion of Satan's seat. The term "*seat*" refers to a throne or a position of authority.

The City of Pergamos was known for its submission to Greek culture and the influence of mythical gods. The Church established in Pergamos was judged to be under the same influence rather than being influential. From its founding, the Church is expected to exist within a culture counter to its own, yet expected to hold to its foundational beliefs, understanding that the world cannot prevail against the Church.

Jesus said that hell would not prevail or prevent the Church from having influence, but the Church is responsible for not allowing the world to become a dominating influence upon the Church.

The Church performed the duties of sacrifice and religious works, but the people within it were not subject to the ruling authority of God. They were not subject to Him because their allegiance belongs to the throne to which they submit.

Antipas served as the overseer-bishop of the Church of Pergamos. His life was taken because he refused to renounce his faith. However, his faith did not represent the practice of all the church followers. His martyrdom was not a replacement for the personal faith practice of others.

(Revelation 2:14) – In contrast to Antipas, there were others who were actively teaching idolatry, encouraging believers to eat food set aside to honor idol gods. The issue was not focused on food consumption. Still, the interpretation implies people were encouraged to practice idolatry in addition to their faith in the Messiah by honoring the eating rituals related to the false gods of Baal and Balak.

Not eating the food would clearly establish distinct lines and definitions that would separate the Church from the world. When the difference cannot be seen or heard, the Church will have surrendered its purpose. The inability to distinguish the life of the believer from that of those who follow the ways of the world creates stumbling blocks for those seeking true examples of Christian faith.

(Revelation 2:15) – The absence of honoring submission to the authority of God also created opportunities for false representation of faith, including among Church leaders. In Acts 6:5, Nicolas is identified among the first men selected as Diaconate. His name is mentioned in this assessment from the resurrected Christ, as a man who is untrue to the requirements to serve in that capacity.

Because the atmosphere of the Church was tainted with compromise, as revealed by the authority of Satan's seat. Nicolas established an entire movement named after himself that supported the teachings, which included the idea that it was permissible to eat food reserved for idolatry. This formal practice was fostered by the local Church, which recognized idol gods and condoned immorality.

(Revelation 2:16) – The single response to the charges against the Church is clearly stated: "repent". The demand is to change direction, not simply to amend behavior or lessen the engagement in idolatry, but to completely disband everything that interferes with their inability to serve and honor God. Repentance would require them to return the being subject to God and serving only Him.

Failure to repent would set them at odds against God. His word would continue to admonish them and cut them with judgment. His word would quickly return against them with the same assessment and judgment.

(Revelation 2:17) – He that Hath an Ear: **LET HIM HEAR WHAT THE SPIRIT SAYS** to the Church. Hearing will lead to overcoming; they will overcome that which stands against them, preventing their access to the spiritual manna available to them. Manna symbolizes natural and spiritual provision. Without God's provision, the Church cannot have life.

The charges against the Church will be settled if they hear the voice of God and repent. The white stone is offered to one whose lawful charges have been removed. The punishment and condemnation that should be executed are expunged. The white stone also symbolizes the guarantee that their life (name) will be reserved with God in eternity.

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