

DATE: November 13, 2011

TEXT: Revelation 2: 12-29

TITLE: “Live in the World but not of the World”



As you can see we are looking at two churches this morning. Truthfully, I can only give so many sermons that are negative. Also the complaints against Pergamum and Thyatira are very similar.

I will begin as I have the past two weeks with a very short description of the two cities.

Pergamum was a large, great city. It was the capital of the Roman Province. It was 15 miles from the Med on a very defensible bluff. It was famous for two things. First, it was the cultural center of the region. It has the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest library in the ancient world... only behind Alexandria.

Second, it was the religious center of the region. It has two great religions. It was the center of Emperor Worship. In 29 B.C. it was the first city to build an altar and a temple to the Emperor

Augustus. This city also had a great temple to a serpent god of healing. (Asclepius). A

serpent is often a symbol of Satan. These two facts are why Pergamum Jesus states Pergamum is “where Satan has his throne” and “where Satan lives.”

Thyatira, on the other hand is a very small city. It was about 40 miles from Pergamum and existed primarily as an outer defense of the capital. It was known as a city that was ruled by the trade guilds... especially the trade of producing purple dye. It is possible that Lydia, who is mentioned in the book of Acts, who came from Thyatira, founded the church.

One interesting thought here...this letter to Thyatira points to the fact that Jesus is part of the small church not just the large great churches. We are not a mega-church. New Bedford would not be considered one of the great cities of the region.... but our church is centered on Jesus Christ. Our church is part of the great Kingdom of God... and the Holy Spirit of God is present in this place. We are important in the eyes of our Lord.

I want to share three lessons from our text. We will see the description of Jesus... the condemnation of the church and the promise given to each city.

**Lesson # 1** Jesus describes Himself as the one who sees all, judges all, and punishes all. I will combine the descriptions found in both cities *Rev. 2:12,18*

**“To the angel of the church in Pergamum write: These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword...**

**“To the angel of the church in Thyatira write: These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze.**

Our Lord is described as having **eyes like blazing fire**. Jesus sees all... there is no darkness in His life. Second, Jesus is described as having **“the sharp, double-edged sword.”**

We saw a few weeks ago this is a reference to the written Word of God. There is a standard of truth that will be the basis of judgement. God will not compromise that standard of truth.

Finally, Jesus has **“feet are like burnished bronze.”** In other words they are heavy. His feet will stomp out sin.

Do you remember in *Genesis chapter 4* the story of Cain and his brother Able? A brief recap. Both brought offerings to God.... Cain brought the leftovers from his crops to offer. Able brought the best from his flocks. *Genesis 4:4-8 gives this account...*

**The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, 5 but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.**

**6 Then the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? 7 If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it.”**

**8 Now Cain said to his brother Abel, “Let’s go out to the field.” While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him**

God says to Cain... “I will not accept the left overs of your life.... but do not be unhappy,

try again.”

But Cain did not want to try again. Cain did not want to give his life to God. Cain decided to lower the standard. I can see him thinking to himself... “If Able were not around, God would accept me and my gift.... it’s all Able’s fault.” Cain kills his brother. God does not lower his standard. God condemns and judges Cain.

We live in a day and age where society as a whole and individuals try to lower the standards of God. We hear in words or in actions these thoughts...

“God can’t expect purity of couples... after all it’s the 21<sup>st</sup> century.”

“God, can’t expect honesty, after all the workplace is a dog eat dog environment.”

“God can’t expect respect of parents... my parents are often too strict and narrow.”

“God can’t expect purity of mouths... everyone tells jokes and swears once in a while.”

“God can’t expect going to church every week... it’s our only day off in a busy schedule and sports always seems to be scheduled on Sunday.”

I could go on and on. We live in a day of lowered standards. Know this truth, Jesus sees all, Jesus does not lower His standards. The Word of God remains the same yesterday, today and tomorrow and Jesus has bronze feet... He will stomp out evil.

**Lesson # 2** Notice the danger of trying to combine the values and lifestyle of our faith with the values and lifestyle of the world. To understand this lesson allow me to look at the Old

Testament references in our text. Remember the Old Testament is the foundation for the new Testament and especially Revelation. Pergamum was said to hold the teaching of Balaam.

This story is found in Numbers 22 to 25. Moses led the people out of Egypt. However where they traveled there were already nations and this frightened the kings. Balak was the King of Moab. He summoned his High Priest and told him to curse the Israelites. Balaam resists... especially when his donkey (ass) talks to him. He also did not think it would work (he did not trust his god). But he came up with another plan. Balaam and the King sent the most beautiful women in the Kingdom to ‘get to know’ the Israelite men. *Numbers 25:1 states...*

**1 While Israel was staying in Shittim, the men began to indulge in sexual immorality with Moabite women, 2 who invited them to the sacrifices to their gods. The people ate the sacrificial meal and bowed down before these gods. 3 So Israel yoked themselves to the Baal of Peor. And the LORD’s anger burned against them.**

Thyatira had a women like Jezebel. Jezebel in 1 Kings 16 -18 was the wife of King Ahab.

She was evil and smart. She guided her husband in the death of all the Prophets of Israel until only Elijah was left. Her name has become the epitome of evil. You do not name your baby girl Jezebel.

This was what was happening in these two cities. Christians were under attack. In Pergamum you were required to worship both the Emperor and the serpent god. In Thyatira you were required to join a trade guild and worship the god of the trade guild. All these gods had temple prostitutes and were very, very immoral.

There were teachers in both these Christian churches who were teaching that it was O.K. to compromise and accommodate their faith with the pagan practices of the community.

Here was their argument. They said Jesus died for their sins. Jesus saves us by grace. Jesus is a loving forgiving God... therefore it does not matter what you do with your body as long as your spirit stays true to Jesus. Drink as much as you want.... join with any woman that you want... behave in any way that you want.. As long as you worship Jesus. By the way, this message was very popular. The church at Pergamum was fairly large and did a lot of good social work in the community. It was almost what we would call a mega church today. And yet it was condemned by Jesus for accommodating their life to the world.

Isn't this the world we live in today. As I was writing my sermon I thought about the job I

held for 6 years during college and seminary. I worked at a fairly large car dealership. Part time in the school year and full time in the summer. I was a painters assistant and the janitor. It was a typical work place. About 30 men worked as mechanics or collision men or parts dept. At coffee breaks we would sit in the back where customers were not allowed. Foul, foul language. Very off color jokes. Calendars of naked women surrounded us. Let me say that did not terribly bother me. I do not expect non-Christians to act as Christians. What bothered me the most were the 2 or 3 men who went to church and claimed a faith in Jesus that joined in the foul language and jokes. Let me say I loved my time there. I had some of the best conversations about faith I have ever had. No revival... I was just a punk college kid... but maybe times of seed planting.

Christians are called to be in the world but not of the world.

Does this mean our language is different? Certainly yes

Does this mean our T.V. and movie watching and music we listen to is different? Certainly yes

Does this mean our parenting is different? Certainly yes

Does this mean our time priorities are different? Yes

Does this mean our attitudes at work or at home or in stores are different? Yes

Does this mean our financial goals are different? Yes

Does this mean our morals are different? Yes

Does this mean our thoughts are different? Yes

I could go on and on and on. In the world but not of the world. Yes, we are saved by

grace through faith... but it is a real faith that changes who we are. *Romans 12: 1-2 states...*

**Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. 2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.**

We offer ourselves to our Lord... We worship our Lord... and we are transformed by our Lord.

**Lesson # 3** Notice the promises given to men and women of faith. *Rev 2: 17 states*

**17 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it.**

I want to concentrate on the white stone with a name on it. What is the name written on the stone? Most commentators believe that the name on the stone is "Christ." We gain his name.

I will not be judged by the actions of Doug Runyan. I have the name of Christ. That is now my identity. First and foremost I am a child of God..I am a Christian. I will be judged by that new name.

Let me close this point by stating a truth.... it's not easy being different. Was I mocked at the car dealership for my faith.. Yes. Do people still think I am crazy for my Christian faith..

Yes. Do non-Christians test us and try to push us to compromise / yes. But know this. We are

overcomers. We have the name of Christ now and forever.

AMEN