

## **~PERGAMUM (276)**

**(Per'ga-mum) [Citadel, Acropolis]**

.. **History**

.. **Religion Of Pergamum**

.. **Where The Throne Of Satan Is**

.. **Teaching Of Balaam**

- **A Mysian city in the Northwest part of Asiatic Turkey, or Asia Minor, and the location of one of the seven congregations to which the apostle John addressed letters as recorded in Revelation.**
- **Saying; What you see write in a scroll and send it to the seven congregations, in Ephesus and in Smyrna and in **Pergamum** and in Thyatira and in Sardis and in Philadelphia and in Laodicea. (Revelation 1:11)**
- **And to the angel of the congregation in **Pergamum** write. These are the things that he says who has the sharp, long two-edged sword. (Revelation 2:12)**
- **I know where you are dwelling, that is, where the throne of Satan is, and yet you keep on holding fast my name, and you did not deny your faith in me even in the days of Antipas, my witness, the faithful one, who was killed by your side, where Satan is dwelling. (Revelation 2:13)**
- **Nevertheless, I have a few things against you, that you have there those holding fast the teaching of Balaam, who went teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit fornication. (Revelation 2:14)**
- **So you, also, have those holding fast the teaching of the sect of Nicolaus likewise. (Revelation 2:15)**
- **Therefore repent. If you do not, I am coming to you quickly, and I will war with them with the long sword of my mouth. (Revelation 2:16)**
- **Let the one who has an ear hear what the spirit says to the congregations; To him that conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white pebble, and upon the**

pebble a new name written which no one knows except the one receiving it. (**Revelation 2:17**)

- The city was about 80 kilometers (50 miles) North of Smyrna or modern Izmir and about 25 kilometers (15 miles) from the coast of the Aegean Sea. Close to the site of ancient **Pergamum** lies modern Bergama.
- **Pergamum** was originally a fortress on a steep, isolated hill between two rivers. In time the city spread into the valley below, and the hill became the acropolis.

## .. History

- There is uncertainty as to the origin of the people of **Pergamum**, but some evidence points to Achaia in Greece. By **420 B.C.E.** the city was striking coins, and in the next century Xenophon mentioned it as a fortified city.
- After the death of Alexander the Great, it became part of Lysimachus territory. Lysimachus lieutenant Philetaerus became ruler of the city and surrounding territory, beginning the reign of the Attalids under whom **Pergamum** became a wealthy and important city.
- King Attalus I, **241-197 B.C.E.**, sided with the Romans against the Macedonians. His successor, Eumenes II, built up an immense library that rivaled the famous library in Alexandria.
- Supposedly at this time writing parchment, *pergamena charta*, was invented in the city. Also, by this period the kingdom of Pergamum controlled most of West Asia Minor.
- In **133 B.C.E.** Attalus III, on his deathbed, willed Pergamum to Rome, whereupon the city became the capital of the Roman province of Asia. Even when it ceased to be the capital, Pergamum continued to hold great importance as an official administrative center.

**See Also ASIA**

## .. Religion Of Pergamum

- Pagan religion was greatly stressed in **Pergamum**. It seems that Chaldean Magi, astrologers, fled from Babylon to **Pergamum**, setting up

their central college there. Eumenes II built a huge marble altar to the god Zeus to celebrate his defeat of the Gauls.

- The remains of it have been unearthed and show that it was decorated with an enormous relief depicting gods battling giants. The sick from all parts of Asia flocked to Pergamum because of its temple of Asclepius, the god of healing and medicine.
- An especially noteworthy aspect of religion in **Pergamum** was its worship of political rulers. The city built a magnificent temple for the worship of Caesar Augustus.
- Thus it was the first city to have a temple dedicated to the imperial cult. During the days of Emperors Trajan and Severus, two more such temples were constructed there, so that the **Encyclopaedia Britannica** calls **Pergamum** the chief centre of the imperial cult under the early empire. [1959, Vol. 17, p. 507]
- Such worship of the Roman emperor doubtless served politically to weld all the various conquered countries of the empire together under a common god, they could each worship their local or national gods, but all must also worship the emperor.

## .. Where The Throne Of Satan Is

- In the apostle John's letter to the congregation in **Pergamum**, he mentioned that the city was where Satan is dwelling and that the Christians were thus living where the throne of Satan is.
- I know where you are dwelling, that is, where the throne of Satan is, and yet you keep on holding fast my name, and you did not deny your faith in me even in the days of Antipas, my witness, the faithful one, who was killed by your side, where Satan is dwelling. (**Revelation 2:13**)
- The phrase has been referred to the complex of pagan cults, . . . but the main allusion is probably to emperor worship. This was where the worship of the divine emperor had been made the touchstone of civic loyalty under Domitian. [New Bible Dictionary, edited by J. Douglas, 1985, p. 912]
- Since the martyrdom of Antipas is mentioned in the same verse as the throne of Satan, Antipas may have been killed for refusing to worship Caesar.

- Perhaps an additional factor bearing on the identification of where the throne of Satan is was the prominent worship of Zeus, or Jupiter, the chief god among all the pagan gods and goddesses. Legend said that from the hill where **Pergamum** was built certain gods had witnessed the birth of Zeus, and the immense altar later located on the acropolis is considered one of the marvels of the age.
- Persons worshiping Zeus could have other gods but were to view them as subordinate to him. The Christians in **Pergamum** were commended, though, because they held fast to their exclusive devotion to the true God, Yehowah, and did not deny the faith despite dwelling where the throne of Satan was.

### · Teaching Of Balaam

- However, in the congregation there was the undermining influence of those **holding fast the teaching of Balaam**.
- Nevertheless, I have a few things against you, that you have there those **holding fast the teaching of Balaam**, who went teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit fornication. (**Revelation 2:14**)
- This expression calls to mind the Mesopotamian prophet Balaam, who, after unsuccessful attempts to curse Israel, suggested using pagan women to draw male Israelites into the lewd worship of false gods. As a consequence of the resulting sexual immorality and idolatry, 24,000 Israelites died.
- Now Israel was dwelling in Shittim. Then the people started to have immoral relations with the daughters of Moab. (**Numbers 25:1**)
- And the women came calling the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people began to eat and to bow down to their gods. (**Numbers 25:2**)
- So Israel attached itself to the Baal of Peor, and the anger of Yehowah began to blaze against Israel. (**Numbers 25:3**)
- Hence Yehowah said to Moses; Take all the head ones of the people and expose them to Yehowah toward the sun, that the burning anger of Yehowah may turn back from Israel. (**Numbers**

**25:4)**

- **Then Moses said to the judges of Israel; Each one of you kill his men who have an attachment with the Baal of Peor. (Numbers 25:5)**
- **But, look! A man of the sons of Israel came, and he was bringing near to his brothers a Midianite woman before Moses eyes and before the eyes of all the assembly of the sons of Israel, while they were weeping at the entrance of the tent of meeting. (Numbers 25:6)**
- **When Phinehas the son of Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest caught sight of it, he at once got up from the midst of the assembly and took a lance in his hand. (Numbers 25:7)**
- **Then he went after the man of Israel into the vaulted tent and pierced both of them through, the man of Israel and the woman through her genital parts. At that the scourge was halted from upon the sons of Israel. (Numbers 25:8)**
- **And those who died from the scourge amounted to twenty-four thousand. (Numbers 25:9)**
- **Then Yehowah spoke to Moses, saying; (Numbers 25:10)**
- **Phinehas the son of Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest has turned back my wrath from upon the sons of Israel by his tolerating no rivalry at all toward me in the midst of them, so that I have not exterminated the sons of Israel in my insistence on exclusive devotion. (Numbers 25:11)**
- **For that reason say; Here I am giving him my covenant of peace. (Numbers 25:12)**
- **And it must serve as the covenant of a priesthood to time indefinite for him and his offspring after him, due to the fact that he tolerated no rivalry toward his God and proceeded to make atonement for the sons of Israel. (Numbers 25:13)**
- **Incidentally the name of the fatally struck Israelite man who was fatally struck with the Midianitess was Zimri the son of Salu, a chieftain of a paternal house of the Simeonites. (Numbers 25:14)**

- And the name of the Midianite woman fatally struck was Cozbi the daughter of Zur, he was a head one of the clans of a paternal house in Midian. (**Numbers 25:15**)
- Later Yehowah spoke to Moses, saying; (**Numbers 25:16**)
- Let there be a harassing of the Midianites, and you men must strike them. (**Numbers 25:17**)
- Because they are harassing you with their deeds of cunning that they committed against you cunningly in the affair of Peor and in the affair of Cozbi the daughter of a chieftain of Midian, their sister who was fatally struck in the day of the scourge over the affair of Peor. (**Numbers 25:18**)
- Neither let us practice fornication, as some of them committed fornication, only to fall, twenty-three thousand of them in one day. (**1 Corinthians 10:8**)
- Evidently some in the **Pergamum** congregation, those holding fast the teaching of Balaam, **were condoning fornication**.
- My reason is that certain men have slipped in who have long ago been appointed by the Scriptures to this judgment, ungodly men, turning the undeserved kindness of our God into an excuse for loose conduct and proving false to our only Owner and Lord, Jesus Christ. (**Jude 1:4**)
- Too bad for them, because they have gone in the path of Cain, and have rushed into the erroneous course of Balaam for reward, and have perished in the rebellious talk of Korah! (**Jude 1:11**)
- They have eyes full of adultery and unable to desist from sin, and they entice unsteady souls. They have a heart trained in covetousness. They are accursed children. (**2 Peter 2:14**)
- Abandoning the straight path, they have been misled. They have followed the path of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the reward of wrongdoing. (**2 Peter 2:15**)
- **Pergamum** was noted for an elaborate temple of Aphrodite, or Venus, the goddess of sexual love, and sensuous religious practices were common.

### **See Also BALAAM**

- **Some in the congregation had also been influenced by the teaching of the sect of Nicolaus, and they were urged to repent of that.**
- **So you, also, have those holding fast the teaching of the sect of Nicolaus likewise. ([Revelation 2:15](#))**
- **Therefore repent. If you do not, I am coming to you quickly, and I will war with them with the long sword of my mouth. ([Revelation 2:16](#))**