***The Church at Pergamum

RV11-01***

Please turn in your Bibles to the last book of the Bible. We are beginning to look at Revelation 2:12-17 which deal with the third letter of the seven letters in this particular portion of the book. You remember that this book is being written by the last surviving member of the apostolic band, the twelve disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the apostle John, the only one, to our knowledge, that actually died a natural death rather than a martyr's death. He is at this time in exile on an island in the Aegean Sea 35 miles off the coast of western Turkey. The name of the island is Patmos. He has been banished there by order of the persecuting Roman Emperor Domitian, who was then on the throne, the last of the Flavian Dynasty.

John is being given a vision of the future culmination of human history preceding the return of the Lord Jesus Christ to the earth. In order for us to be able to understand His line of thought, the Lord has included in Revelation 1:19 the outline of this book. It is summed up in three phrases. First of all, it said, "The things which you have seen." This covers Revelation 1:9-18. The second main section is, "The things which are," which actually covers Revelation 2:1 to 3:22, or the second and third chapters. Then the third main section of this book is described under the phrase, "The things which shall be," which goes from Revelation 4:1 thorough 22:5. We are currently in the second section, as you will see: "The things which are," in chapters 2 and 3.

These chapters deal with the church while it is still here on earth before the tribulation period. This section, chapters 2 and 3, is made up of seven letters to seven specific local churches in the Roman proconsular province of Asia. That's not Asia Minor. This is the Roman province of Asia. It lies off the coast of western Turkey in the Aegean Sea. These seven churches move in a circle. These specific local churches actually existed. They were fully functioning local ministries at the time that John wrote. There were other churches in existence, but they were not included. Some of these were equally as famous as these seven, and of equal substance.

For example, there was the church at Colossae. Yet that church was not selected. It is not impossible to imagine that people who read this book originally must have wondered why it referenced these seven churches and no others. As we look at these churches, we do recognize that each of them has a unique condition existing within it which distinguishes it from all others. As a matter of fact, you will discover, after we have covered these seven, that there is an amazing variety in these churches, and you have to remember that they all existed at the same time. They had such fantastic divergent problems; divergent attitudes; and, divergent reactions, all of them existing within a small area of the Roman Empire, and in the same political situation of the day.

These letters, furthermore, follow a specific order. They start with Ephesus, and they go around the circuit until it ends up at the last one at Laodicea. It would again cause us to wonder: why that order, and why that specific direction? Is that significant? The comment to each of these seven churches, of course, is applied to the current situation as it existed in John's day. So the principle of literal interpretation requires us, first of all, to bring in the isagogical background; that is, the situation of the day politically; how people did things; the way of life; and, the social situation. We need to bring all these facts in as background, and then read these letters so that we are reading them from their frame of reference as much as possible. We then apply them to the specific situations as they did exist.

From our vantage point, 2,000 years later, we look at these letters, and we see something in them that perhaps the early believers did not. As we look back upon it from our vantage point in history, there does seem to be a clue. Strangely enough, we discover that there is a correlation in many respects to what has happened in church history from New Testament times to the present, and to what seems to be the direction immediately before us.

**Ephesus**

So backing up for a moment, let's look at the letter to the church at Ephesus, for example. In church history, dividing it into seven periods, this is the first period. It was the period of the birth of the church, and the first operating era of the apostolic band. It was a period which was characterized by fervent evangelism. It had faithful application of Bible doctrine, which means that somebody was teaching the Word, and people were learning the Word, and they were responding. This was a time when they were clearly separated from the evil of the world. But it was a period (it was a church situation) in which, gradually, there developed a very critical area of the life in the church at Ephesus. That was in "agape" love. That word "agape" represents a mental attitude love which is free of all emotional connotations. It was an attitude of mind that they had toward one another as believers. The breakdown of mental attitude low resulted in the cooling off of their fervency for their service for the Lord, and for the intake of the Word of God. They were not wrong in doctrine. They were still very orthodox. They were not indifferent to the person of the Lord Jesus. They began to have justifications and attitudes that were leading them to put substitutes in the way of their occupation with Christ.

When we look back historically, this was exactly the condition that existed in the early church. So we're talking about the year 30 to the year 100 A.D. – the period of the apostolic ministry. This was indeed a period that is an outstanding example of Christian service, because the whole known world was evangelized. Just read Romans 10:18, Romans 16:26, Colossians 1:6, and Colossians 1:23. Paul points out in all these verses the fantastic extent of evangelism that had taken place throughout the Roman Empire. The outreach, as a matter of fact, of these believers at this stage of the church has never been equaled since. On a comparable basis, we have never reached the extent of the world that we have contact with as they did with theirs.

These Christians refused to fraternize with those who were negative to Bible doctrine, or to support religious leaders who did not teach sound doctrine, or who did not conduct the work of the Lord as they should have. They were separatists. They were willing to have nothing to do with evil. They were willing and determined to have nothing to do with anything that supported evil, or that encouraged the mission of the church to be undermined.

The second generation of believers, however, were cooling off from all this. They were permitting mental attitude bitternesses toward one another to creep in, and a tinge of bitterness and resentment toward the Lord, because things were under pressure. They were wondering whether it was all worth it. At worst, there was a spirit of apathy that was setting in. The Lord said, "That's bad, because this sets the stage for compromise."

This was the wonderful period of time when John wrote the book of Revelation, and that finished the canon of Scripture. The Bible was now complete from one end to the other.

So as we read the Ephesian letter, and then we look at the early history of the church, there is a fantastic correlation. Of course, to the Ephesian church, the Lord said, "Shape up. Get that relaxed mental attitude squared away. Get "agape" love back in operation. Otherwise, I'm going to come, and I'm going to snatch your testimony out." Well, there is none there today. The sad story is that apparently this church was not able, in the long run, to reverse its course.

**Smyrna**

When we come to the second letter, the one to Smyrna, we see from this letter that this church was a suffering church. It was just a few miles up the road. Yet, there were fantastically different conditions. Surely that could not have been accidental. Surely this was a preparation that the Holy Spirit was making – to create conditions and to bring about these circumstances in these various churches to teach us something relative to the local church ministry as it was going to be existing throughout all the history of the church. This second period was characterized by persecution and suffering for the Christians at the hand of the Roman government, as they had not really experienced up to this point. The Christians were attacked both by the civil authorities and by the religious Jews of the city, so that they were under attack by Jew and gentile alike.

They suffered tremendous economic privations, and we find that church history confirms this exactly. Christians, at the period that followed the apostolic period, suffered great economic privations. All you had to do was turn a Christian in for being a believer, and the government would confiscate his holdings under certain edicts, and you would get 10% for turning him in. A person could make a handsome living under those conditions, because one of the things that Satan was out to do was to wipe the church out of existence. He made the mistake, as smart as he is, of doing it by putting intense pressure upon the individual believers.

Well, as we look at this period of church history, which runs from 101 to about the year 313 A.D., a very strange thing developed, and Satan realized that his tactics were bad. That is that the Christians multiplied fantastically. Literally thousands of them were killed by the Roman government over this period of the two centuries of their persecution under the hands of the Roman authorities. Yet the Christians multiplied everywhere.

One of the reasons, of course, that the attacks were so severe against the Christians was that the Christians refused to enter the emperor worship. Furthermore, the Christians had the audacity to tell the civil authorities why they couldn't do that. And of all things, what they said was, in effect, that the Roman government was in error in demanding this, and it was an error in ascribing deity to their emperors. They said they knew that to be the truth because they had a written record from God that explained those things. In other words, the Christians dared to declare to the government authorities that they had a standard superior to the government itself. If you try something like that in Russia today, you'll have the same experience that they did in the Roman Empire. If you were to be in Russia today, and you were to dare to say, "I have a standard that is superior to the authority of the Russian government, and I have an authority that supersedes the authority of the Russian government – the authority of the Word of God," you may pay for it with your life. This is what brought down the wrath of the government upon the Christians. The Christians dared to say that they had an authority which was superior to that of the government.

So we look back at the believers in this second period of church history, and we see that they suffered economically and they suffered physically. There were many of them, as I say, literally thousands, who were put in the arenas, or who were covered with pitch and set on fire to illuminate the garden parties of the emperors. They were treated in the most vicious way imaginable – the cruelty that was characteristic of Rome. Rome, which Daniel says is a government with iron teeth, was amply demonstrated as it gobbled up and chewed the believers in this period of history. This was characterized by the Smyrna church.

Many copies of the Bible were burned. Christians were tortured in order to discover where they had hidden the Scriptures. We can look back and see that there were about ten distinct periods, beginning with Nero (who was in Paul's day), and ending with Diocletian in about the year 305, when there was a steady stream of persecutions. That amounted to ten distinct persecutions by the Roman government. They would rise and fall, but each time with greater severity.

However, the Christians multiplied everywhere under these sufferings, because one nice thing about persecution is that all of the fakes in the congregation are weeded out. All of the summertime Christians are moved out, and the only people you had left were the people who are ready to die for the Lord Jesus. Local churches were established in many parts of the world. Scriptures, while being burned, were also copied and translated. Finally, in the year 312 A.D., a new emperor came to the throne at Rome – a man named Constantine. We'll be looking at him in a little more detail later. But Constantine brought an end to these series of persecutions against Christians, and the period of church history represented by the Smyrna letter came to an end.

Suddenly you could be a Christian. Suddenly you were free from the fear of death. Suddenly you were part of a religion which was now legal. At first, it was a great relief to the believers. Everybody had thought that the millennium had arrived. It was now possible to be a Christian without having to suffer for it, and maybe being killed for it.

However, that brings us to letter number three. For what the believers then did not realize, was that a condition was going to arise in church history, following the ascension of Constantine to the throne of the Roman Empire, which was represented here by this letter to Pergamum. As we look at this letter, again we find, strangely enough, features that coordinate from church history. This one is particularly fascinating because this letter has certain phrases in it, the meaning of which almost eludes us unless we have enough background to know what was going on at the time, and what the situation was within the city of Pergamum itself. We need to be able to know what the frame of reference was upon which these remarks were made. So we're going to be doing some really detailed background study, and then this letter will practically explain itself to you as you read it.

**The Letter to Pergamum**

So let's begin at Revelation 2:12: "'And to the angel of the church in Pergamum, write; these things,' says He who has the short sword with the two edges." The word "and" indicates a continuation now of the series of letters that the Lord is dictating to John. At this point, remember that John is acting as a secretary, taking the specific dictation of the Lord Jesus. He is to write to the angel of the church at Pergamum. The word "angel" is the Greek word "aggelos." "Aggelos", as we have already learned from previous letters, means simply "messenger." It identifies someone who is called a messenger at the church of Pergamum. This word "aggelos" itself may refer to spirit beings. That's the way we're usually acquainted with this word. Then it's translated just the way it looks – as "angel."

However, it can also apply to human beings in terms of one who is a messenger. That's the use that we have here in all of these seven letters. It is referring to someone who is the pastor-teacher communicator of doctrine in these various local churches. He is the one that the congregation has, at some point in time, recognized as the one that God has provided for them to receive the feeding of doctrine necessary for them to enter into God's second great provision of rewards. If a church has to call a pastor, and if the church has some smarts spiritually, that is the first; the second; the last; and, the only thing they consider. Can this man so feed us the full counsel of the Word of God such that our human spirits can be stored with God's divine viewpoint so that I can store treasures in heaven? That's the most important thing in life for you.

So these letters are very naturally directed to the local pastor-teacher. They are the ones who are responsible for the good things that are taking place in these churches, but they are also responsible for the bad things that are existing in these churches. What we see again in these churches gives us a picture of what happens through local churches throughout the era of church history. Certain periods and certain things are more specific – the emphasis in a certain direction. We have seen that here with the period of the apostolic period and the period of suffering that followed.

Now we're entering a period that we can describe by the word "compromise." The pressure is off. Now what is going to happen to the believers? Well, it was already happening in the church here in the province of Asia at the time that John was writing.

It says, "To the pastor-teacher of the church." The word "church" is the Greek word "ekklesia." "Ekklesia" refers to a specific body of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. This word is used of Christians as a whole. Christians everywhere (cutting across denominational lines) are called the "ekklesia" of God. They are the church of God. They are the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the invisible aspect of the church. Then there is also the word "ekklesia" used in terms of an organized group of local believers – people who gather in a specific geographic location for the functioning of the institution of the local church. It is, again, to provide the means of access to a knowledge of God's divine viewpoint. So we call it the visible aspect of the church.

Here in Revelation 2:12, we're speaking about the local visible aspect (the organizational aspect) of the church in Pergamum. Of course, those who are in Pergamum who are genuine believers were also part of the invisible body. "To the church which is in." The word "in" is the preposition "en" in the Greek, and that means "location." So he's indicating a geographic location, and that location is called "Pergamum." Sometimes you read it as Pergamos," but it should be "Pergamum." One of the ancient Greek writers wrote it "Pergamos," and for some reason they picked it up, but the name of the city was actually Pergamum.

This was the northernmost city of the ring of the seven cities. It is in western Turkey. This is Turkey today. It was a district which was called Anatolia in the ancient world. Anatolia means "the land of the rising sun." It's located 60 miles northeast of Smyrna, the last letter that we looked at. And it's in a district of Mysia. It is 20 miles inland from the Aegean Sea. Just to give you some geographic orientation, one of the things that Pergamum had was an Acropolis. That is, it had a high elevation. When we use the word Acropolis, generally, we think about Athens. Athens had the famed Acropolis. Atop the Acropolis of Athens is the famed Parthenon. You may not get to Athens too soon, but you might go south to Nashville, Tennessee. If you ever do, by all means, do not miss going to see the Parthenon which has been reproduced piece-for-piece, and identity-for-identity, right there in the city of Nashville, Tennessee. It is very imposing to walk around there and to see the Parthenon reproduced just the way it is on the Acropolis in Athens. You can actually stand on the end of it, and you can look down and you can see the curve of the columns. You can see how they taper. You can see the differences between the columns – all of these clever things that the brilliance of Greek architecture came up with, so that this monstrous building of marble just seems to float around there, and it has very graceful lines and graceful appearance.

Well, an Acropolis was always obviously a super important place. It was an imposing position in the city. It was very naturally the place to which the public buildings; the temples; the religious life; and, the political life would gravitate. So sure enough, here in Pergamum, with its Acropolis such as Athens had, and even Corinth had, there were the public buildings. The top of the Acropolis was crowded with these public buildings; altars; terraces; and, libraries. The residential part of the city lay below the Acropolis, and there is a city there today. It's called the city of Bergma.

Pergamum was once the capital of a kingdom in western Turkey which was actually called the Kingdom of Pergamum. It was made up of several territories. The names of these were Mysia, Lydia, Caria, and part of Phrygia. The Kingdom of Pergamum was formed from the breakup of the empire left by Alexander the Great. The Kingdom of Pergamum was actually begun by one of Alexander the Great's generals. However, this territory ended its independence when the last king, Attalus III, died in 133 B.C. He bequeathed his kingdom to Rome. The Roman Senate accepted the gift, and they incorporated Pergamum into the Empire as a proconsular province of Asia. That's how the province of Asia, which was a very important province in the Roman Empire, was formed. It was formed out of what previously had been these territories brought together under the governmental leadership of the kingdom of Pergamum. So the whole thing was simply delivered over to Rome.

The city of Pergamum itself remained the capital for about 200 years, and it vied in importance with the cities of Ephesus and Smyrna. Pergamum, in time, lost its position as the capital city. That gravitated down to Ephesus because Ephesus was on the seacoast. Therefore, the commercial center of the province of Asia moved toward Ephesus.

Actually, Pergamum was a frontier town. Beyond the very edge of what had been the kingdom of Pergamum lay barbarians. There was a barbarous territory just beyond the city of Pergamum. And for that reason, the people of Pergamum viewed themselves with considerable pride as the jumping off point of Greek civilization into the adjoining barbarian territory of the Celts. The citizens, therefore, were very vain about the contrast between the elegance of the buildings; the rituals; and, the civilization that characterized Pergamum with that of the coarseness and the wildness of the people beyond its borders.

**The Library at Pergamum**

This was a very wealthy city. This was a city that had a great deal in which to take pride on a civic basis. For example, it had a library which was second only to the library at Alexandria. The library here at Pergamum contained 200,000 volumes. The one at Alexandria had about 450,000 volumes. At one time, Cleopatra possessed the Library of Alexandria, of course, during her reign. She aggravated Julius Caesar and just bugged him to death to give her the library from Pergamum. She wanted to add that to Alexandria to really make a stupendous library. Julius Caesar never got around to indulging her.

However, when she and Mark Antony began playing house together, Marc Antony was a much softer touch for Cleopatra. She found that she could really wind Mark around her finger. Finally, he agreed to give her the library at Pergamum, the second greatest of the ancient world. Probably he made this gift to her in the document that was called The Donations, which got Antony into a lot of trouble. It was his Donations to Cleopatra and to the Egyptian empire that got him into trouble with the Roman Senate, so that when he and the other Roman ruler, Octavius, the Caesar Augustus of Jesus' Day, finally came head-on, face-to-face with one another, they eventually came into conflict because public opinion had turned against Mark Antony who had been more popular. But public opinion turned against him because he was fooling around with this foreign queen, and giving her all kinds of territories and all kinds of benefits out of the Roman Empire.

Of course, if you remember your ancient history, it finally all climaxed at the famous battle of Actium, a naval battle, in which Mark Antony was completely defeated, and he and Cleopatra headed out, beating it back to Egypt, where eventually the Caesar Augustus (Octavius) caught up with them with his forces. Mark Antony thought that Cleopatra had been killed. And because he thought so much of her (he really loved her), he rammed a sword through himself, but he didn't die. A servant came along and said, "Cleopatra is alive. She has barricaded herself in the second story of her palace house," the lower floor of which was filled with fantastic Egyptian treasures. The treasure is what Octavius was after. He needed it to pay off his soldiers who had been fighting with him against Mark Antony. So they picked him up; took him to Cleopatra; slipped him in through a secret entrance; and, he died the way he would have liked to have died – in her arms.

This only illustrates, again, that he would have done anything for her. It is staggering to us. We talk about libraries, and we talked about 200,000 books. That may not be impressive, but in the ancient world, that was the most fantastically wealthy, marvelous possession that you could imagine. For Mark Antony just to say, "OK, Cleopatra, take it home with you. Add it to the Alexandria Library," it really took something on his part. He had to love the girl to do that, because he knew what antagonism would be the result against himself. And perhaps it suggests to us that Cleopatra had something more to commend her than what we usually think about her in her paramour adventures. She probably had a pretty good mind, and she was probably interested in reading.

In any case, the ancient histories are a little in doubt whether this library ever got to Alexandria. He did give it to her, but we have some doubt whether it ever got there.

**Temples**

The city of Pergamum rivaled Ephesus in its temples. Pergamum was proud of the fact that it had temples to Zeus; to Athena; to Dionysus; and, to Asclepius. That was the god of healing. For this reason, Pergamum possessed a world famous medical center. It was renowned throughout the ancient world from the 4th century B.C. to the second century A.D. It had a hillside theater that seeded 3,500 spectators. It invented a writing material that proved to be a boon during the Middle Ages in preservation of the copies of the Scriptures. They invented a material called "parchment" which consisted of the skins of animals that had been scraped clean and prepared – usually of sheep or goats. It makes a very durable writing material. It is much more durable in the long run than papyrus. After they invented it, it was called the "pergamena," after "Pergamum," where it was invented.

Legend has it that the invention was the result of this competition between libraries – the one at Alexandria and the one at Pergamum. The legend goes that Ptolemy Philadelphus, the pharaoh of Egypt, refused to authorize the shipment of papyrus to Pergamum because he didn't want them creating so many books, and he was fearful that they would outstrip his library in Alexandria. So in order to produce a substitute writing material, the story goes that they developed pergamena.

One of the things for which this city was very famous was the temple to Zeus. If you should ever travel to East Berlin, it's there to this day on display, and you can see it. By the way, he was called Zeus Soter. You Greek students immediately recognize "soter" as the word "savior:" Zeus the Savior. This famous altar was erected in 180 B.C by King Eumenes II of Pergamum to celebrate his victory over the Gauls. This altar stood 50 feet high in a colonnaded enclosure, and the altar itself was more than 100 feet square in area. It was mounted by great marble steps on either side. It was indeed a very magnificent building. It had tremendous columns, and then it had this huge base upon which it was built. Then up and down on both sides, there were tremendous marble staircases by which you mounted to the altar area, which was inside. It had all kinds of decorations along the edge called the "frieze," especially on the side.

What we actually have here (and this is why this is such a valuable archaeological find) is that the art (the sculpture) on the temple to Zeus broke completely with the style of the ancient world, which was very non-action-like sculpture. In observing and commemorating this victory, they produced figures that were in all kinds of tremendous action activities, and they were in great detail. So we learn a lot about the lifestyle and about the conditions of the day just by looking at the carvings on this temple to Zeus. They show great details. What they had on here were illustrations of the events of the war that it was commemorating. But interestingly enough, it also commemorated acts of adultery with the gods and goddesses, which were portrayed on the frieze. From the bodies of the gods and goddesses came snakes. There's a second thing I want you to remember: the worship of Asclepius and snakes. We're going to get back to those a little later, both of which are important in understanding this book.

The frieze on this altar (the carvings) commemorate the defeat of Antiochus III by the Roman fleet with the help of ships from Rhodes and Pergamum at Magnesia in Lydia in 190 B.C. That was the reason that they erected it to begin with. There was constant smoke rising from this altar to Zeus because there were constant sacrifices which were being offered on it. But it's the finest presentation (the finest example) of the Pergamum art school. It showed furious action in great detail.

One of the most classic examples of realism, which this city became famous for in its art, is a statue that I know you have seen in pictures called The Dying Gaul. If you see a picture of that, and remember the nature of the art of this city, because this was a great cultural center, you will see just how realistic they are. If you go up, you can see where the wound is in his side and you can actually see the drops of blood dribbling out of the wound. They were that realistic and that adept in the creation of that particular statuary. The Dying Gaul depicted the victory of Attalus I of the kingdom of Pergamum over the Galatians in 230 B.C.

This city was a center of emperor worship. It was the first city in Asia to erect a temple for the worship of Caesar Augustus – the Octavius who defeated Mark Antony and Cleopatra, and who was the Caesar Augustus of Jesus' Day. It was a great honor to a city to be permitted to put up a temple of worship to the emperor. This was the first city in Asia to erect that kind of a temple. Later, they erected two more to two other emperors. This was a hotbed of emperor worship. You want to remember that also about the city.

Pergamum, thus, was a combination of a pagan cathedral town; a university town; and, a royal residence. It was a city of temples, but of temples which were devoted to licentious worship.

**The Sharp Two-Edged Sword**

That brings us down to the last part of verse 12, where we read: "These things said He who has the sharp sword with two edges." "These things" refers to the content of this letter that the Lord is sending to Pergamum. It is the Greek word "hode," the demonstrative pronoun, and that indicates that he is now going to introduce the content of this letter. The word actually refers to something that you can point to. The word "said" is the Greek word "lego." This particular word stresses the content of the words rather than the words as such. So it indicates that the people of the congregation of Pergamum are to pay attention to the meaning of the words that John is writing. It is present tense, which indicates that the Lord is continually saying these things to them. It is active. Jesus Himself is the one who is communicating these things.

Then we have the description of the author. He is described as, "The one who has the sharp sword." The word "has" is the word "echo." That is the word for possession. It's in the present tense so this is something that is continually true of Jesus. It is active. He personally possesses this particular kind of sword. It is a sharp (an "oxus") sword. The word for "sword" is the word "hromphaia." "Hromphaia" is actually the word that described the Thracian type of long sword which one wielded with both hands. It was used to swing in both directions, and with one well-placed blow, an enemy could be easily decapitated. It is not the short sword which was characteristic of Roman infantry.

Actually, this sword is further described as being one with two edges. The Greek word for two edges is "distomos," which literally means "a double mouth." This description of the Lord Jesus goes back to Revelation 1:16 where He is presented as the one out of whose mouth went a sharp two-edged sword. This characteristic of the Lord Jesus, of having words that are capable of being used as swords, indicates that He is also capable of producing peace by His spoken word. In the millennial kingdom that He is coming to set up upon this earth, this is exactly what He is going to do. He is going to wield the sharp, two-edged sword of His spoken Word, and establish peace upon this earth.

Isaiah 2:4 puts it this way: "And He (that is, the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ) shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many peoples, and they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation; neither shall they learn war anymore." The only time that is going to happen (the only time such a condition can possibly exist) is when Jesus Christ Himself is here with the sharp two-edged sword of the authority of His own Word to establish that kind of peace upon the earth.

Then in Hosea 2:18, we read, "And in that day, I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of the heavens, and with the creeping things on the ground, and I will break the bow and the sword, and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely." The Lord Jesus Christ is not only going to establish peace among mankind, but also amongst the animal world.

Then we may add Micah 4:3, where we read, "And He shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off, and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up a sword against nation; neither shall they learn war anymore." It is a futile effort to seek to establish some kind of a condition of peace through disarmament upon this earth now. Until the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ, comes, whose Word is like a short, two-edged sword, there will not be peace upon this earth. When He arrives, then He will establish that peace because He has the weapon with which to do it.

Then one more: we may add to this Psalm 46:9: "He makes wars to cease unto the end of the earth. He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in sunder. He burns the chariot in fire." This is a climactic statement about the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ, who comes with the sword, His Word, capable of doing great devastation to His enemies, through that sort of His spoken word, will bring upon this earth, the psalmist says, what mankind has longed for for so long – a condition of world-wide and permanent peace.

What this is indicating to us is that the Lord Jesus Christ is coming to this church, and is going to speak to this church with this sword which, back in chapter 1, comes out of His mouth. This sword has extreme, devastating cutting quality. As we found earlier, this is the Word of God. So what is he saying? He says, "I'm going to come to the church now at Pergamum. There are conditions that exist here, and I'm going to approach you on the basis of the Word of God." He did not have to say that to the church at Ephesus. He didn't have to say that to the suffering church at Smyrna. But something is going wrong now in this church which represents what happened in the third period of church history. There is entering a compromise on Bible doctrine. Some of the most horrendous things that are done in churches today, we're going to try to show you, began right here in this period of time because of compromises that began to be accepted once the pressure of persecution was taken off the believers, and the believers said, "We have to live with these people."

Have you ever heard anybody say to you, as a Christian, "We have to get along with the world? We have to live with the world?" What are they saying? We have to live with the evil of the world system. We have to accommodate ourselves to the evil of the world's system – Satan's world system. Well, what this image (this picture) of Jesus Christ approaching this church to speak to them with this sharp, two-edged sword coming out of His mouth indicates to us is that there's been a breakdown of Bible doctrine here, and of faithfulness to the Word of God. They know that doctrine says this is what you do, and they have compromised what the Word said. So Jesus said, I'm coming to you, and I'm going to deal with you with the Word of God. And when I get through with you, some of you are going to be cut to ribbons, because I am going to deal on the basis of My divine viewpoint – not on the basis of your rationalizing and your accommodating of yourself to Satan's world system.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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