**4 Fold Application of the Revelation churches:**

* To existing churches in John’s day (c. 96 AD).
* To every church for all time – according to the individual churches’ spiritual condition.
* To individual believers.
* Describes the 7 dispensational phases of church history, from apostolic days to the 2nd coming.

---

**Church #3: Pergamum – The Compromising Church, Rev 2:12-17**

Pergamum (or Pergamos in the modern Greek) is located 16 miles from the coastline of the Aegean Sea and is northwest of the current day city of Bergama, Turkey. It was the location of Rome’s provincial capital, it was a major cultural hub and was a beautiful art-filled city. Pergamos was a center for the worship of Dionysus, Zeus, and other pagan gods.

Pergamos was nicknamed “Satan’s City” because of its paganism and idolatry. Christ’s reference to “Satan’s throne” in verse 13 may have alluded to the city’s altar of Zeus. Built on the Acropolis, it was considered at one time the most famous and ornate altar in the world. Some historians have suggested that this altar was the site of the martyrdom of Antipas mentioned in verse 13.

Professing faith in Jesus Christ carried severe consequences in this region of pagan activity. This church demonstrated conviction and courage by its mere existence, yet idolatry had crept into its congregation. The result was both religious and moral compromise. They had yoked the Gospel with paganism, drawing Christ’s stern rebuke in verse 16: “Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth”. [“Them” meaning the promoters of Balaam and the Nicolaitans.]

This blending of beliefs has plagued God’s people since the early days of Israel, and it still exists today. Many churches have crumbled under the banner of tolerance. Whatever Satan cannot curse, crush or destroy, he seeks to corrupt through compromise. We see this problem both in the past and the present, and can describe it as a failure to maintain a distinct identity.

Today’s church has become so fixated on being relevant that it has become irrelevant. People in the world today find little in local churches that is different from the surrounding culture. The result is that they therefore remain disinterested.

**3 Thoughts from Pergamos:**

1. **Remember the lesson of compromise**

Guard against the dilution of true doctrine. There is no room for compromise in God’s Word – it’s either true or it isn’t. If that makes us intolerant in the eyes of some, then so be it. We cannot define truth by our own preferences. It exists outside of popular opinion and does not bend to popular demand. If we hold fast to sound doctrine, Christ will commend us just as He did Antipas, His “faithful martyr.”

* **Jack Graham:** Satan’s primary weapon to stop the believer, to seduce the believer and to neutralize the effectiveness of the believer, is the weapon of compromise.
1. **Remember the antidote of truth**

In the Book of Revelation, 2 of the 5 references to Jesus and the sword of His mouth are contained in this message to the church in Pergamos. The believers in Pergamos had not just strayed from truth, they had become comfortable with lies. The imagery is clear: Jesus highlights His very nature of truth as a comparison to their compromise of that truth. Jesus Himself, the sword of His mouth, truth, the Word – all reflect God’s eternal and unchanging truth. Jesus IS truth.

These verses call to mind Eph 6:17 where we are told that “the sword of the Spirit **IS** the word of God.” And we know from John 1:1 that Jesus is the Word. Jesus – Truth – the Word. These cannot be separated from one another as the Pergamos church had done.

The solution was and still is truth.

* Truth came through Jesus Christ (John 1:17)
* Jesus is the truth (John 14:6)
* God’s word is truth (John 17:17)
1. **Remember the action of repentance**

Though Jesus recognizes the faithfulness of this church, He has one command for them: repent. He identified their success, but rebukes them for their failure. They valued the teachings of men above God’s truth – they compromised.

God’s Word is extremely clear:

2 Cor 6:14 commands us: “Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers.” And then this same verse asks 2 powerful questions: “What fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?”

James 4:4 tells us: “friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”

Our God is uncompromising and Jesus counseled them with one action point: REPENT.

---

**Church #4: Thyatira – The Adulterous Church, Rev 2:18-29**

Founded under Alexander the Great, Thyatira was a wealthy town. It was the headquarters for many ancient guilds, and was noted for its trade, particularly purple dye. About 50 miles from the Aegean Sea, it lies in the far west of Turkey, south of Istanbul and almost due east of Athens. Lydia, one of Paul’s converts, came from this region according to Acts 16:14.

Some Christians and churches feel a need to be all-inclusive when it comes to spiritual and moral boundaries. Evidently, the ancient church in Thyatira felt that way as well. On the surface, the church was commendable for its love, faith, service, patience and greater works. But Christ, with “eyes like a flame of fire” (verse 18), recognized their deficit. The One “who searches the minds and hearts” (verse 23), saw beyond their facade and labelled the core issues – immorality and idolatry.

Jesus said the church in Thyatira TOLERATED Jezebel, a self-proclaimed prophetess. Jezebel here is most likely a symbolic name representing the sexual immorality and idolatry of the evil Jezebel recorded in 1st Kings. As well as her influence that led Christ’s “bond-servants astray” to “commit acts of immorality” (verse 20), many scholars believe that this Jezebel was also encouraging the church to join the trade guilds of Thyatira. This meant the believers would be giving honor to the guild god or goddess.

**What was the result of this tolerance?**

1. A desire to fit in with the culture
2. A failure to rightly define sin
3. Forsaking absolute truth for relativism
4. Failing to take a stand for truth

**What does Christ say to a church that tolerates immorality and idolatry in its midst?**

* **There was a threat of discipline (verse 22)**

When the prophetess refused an opportunity to repent, Christ warned of His judgment: “Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed.” Whether taken figuratively or literally, those words are cautionary. God is holy and will not tolerate rebellion forever. As Hebrews 10:31 says, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

* **There was a threat of death (verse 23)**

Again, Christ’s warning may have been figurative or literal. His promise to kill the woman’s children may have referred to physical children born of her immorality or the spiritual children whom she seduced into her practices. This warning was not just to her but also to “those who commit adultery with her.” Christ was prepared to judge anyone associated with the woman’s immorality. Without repentance, they would find themselves in “great tribulation.”

* **There was a message to the Christians (verses 24-25)**

Not every believer in Thyatira was immoral. There were some who knew God’s holy standards and would not budge from them. The message for those who did not engage in the cult of immorality was to continue to stand their ground – “hold fast what you have till I come”.

* **There was a message to the overcomers (verses 26-28)**

All who would choose faithfulness “until the end” would become conquerors. Christ promised that they would rule the nations with Him, “the bright morning star” (Rev 22:16).

**John Bevere:**

Make sure that your values are firmly anchored in God's Word and not this world's broken system. Jesus, in His LOVE, warns the church in Thyatira against TOLERANCE, which was leading them into immorality and idolatry. Our culture often confuses love and tolerance, but the two couldn't be more different. Love seeks the good of the other person, while tolerance simply seeks to be thought of as good in the other person’s eyes. Love comes from fearing God. Tolerance comes from fearing man. So it really comes down to a simple question: Who do you fear – God or man?

**D.A. Carson:**

In D.A. Carson’s book *The Intolerance of Tolerance*, he points out that we now have “Old Tolerance and New Tolerance”.

* The traditional use of tolerance says “I may disagree with you, but I insist on your right to articulate your opinion, no matter how stupid or ignorant I think it is.”
* New Tolerance is very different as defined by The United Nations Declaration of Principles of Tolerance in 1995. This declaration asserts: “Tolerance involves the rejection of dogmatism and absolutism.”
* Since I know that God’s truths are absolute, I am, according to this UN Declaration, intolerant.

D.A. Carson, again, explains:

* “Now tolerance means that you must not say that anybody is wrong. You have to say that all positions are equally valid.”