



## SAVED TO SERVE

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### THE SEVEN CHURCHES: PERGAMOS

1. In this Sabbath School Lesson, we will continue our series studying the seven churches of Revelation. We will focus on the church of Pergamos and find out how its message applies to us today.

"The names of the seven churches are symbolic of the church in different periods of the Christian Era. The number 7 indicates completeness, and is symbolic of the fact that the messages extend to the end of time, while the symbols used reveal the condition of the church at different periods in the history of the world." {AA 585.3}

2. Read Revelation 2:12. What does Pergamos mean, and what time period does the church of Pergamos cover? See *Strong's Greek Concordance* for #4010.

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"The word Pergamos signifies height, elevation. The period covered by this church may be located from the days of Constantine, or perhaps, rather, from his professed conversion to Christianity, A. D. 323, to the establishment of the papacy, A. D. 538. It was a period in which the true servants of God had to struggle against a spirit of worldly policy, pride, and popularity among the professed followers of Christ, and against the virulent workings of the mystery of iniquity, which finally resulted in the full development of the papal man of sin." {DAR 354.5}

3. As Jesus presents himself to Pergamos, what does He say He has? Revelation 2:12 \_\_\_\_\_
4. What does the sharp sword with two-edges represent? Revelation 2:12; Hebrews 4:12 \_\_\_\_\_

"Holiness to God through Christ is required of Christians. If there are wrongs in the church, they should receive immediate attention. Some may have to be sharply rebuked. This is not doing the erring one any wrong. The faithful physician of the soul cuts deep, that no pestilent matter may be left to burst forth again. After the reproof has been given, then comes repentance and confession, and God will freely pardon and heal. He always pardons when confession is made." {The Review and Herald, December 11, 1900}

5. Read Revelation 2:13. Where does Jesus say the church was dwelling? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Note: The phrase, 'where Satan's seat is' is not entirely speaking about one place on earth since Satan is ever present where God's people are to cause discord and to deceive. However historically, the devil has worked through particular agencies to persecute and lead astray God's church. Who was ruling the world during the time period of Pergamos? Pagan Rome or the Roman Empire, and it was Pagan Rome (represented as the dragon in Revelation 13:2) that gave the Papacy its power, seat, and great authority. 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 further details the foundation of apostasy in the church which led to the rise of the Papacy.

"Where Satan's Seat Is. — Christ takes cognizance of the unfavorable situation of his people during this period. The language is not probably designed to denote locality. As to place, Satan works wherever Christians dwell. But surely there are times and seasons when he works with special power; and the period covered by the church of Pergamos was one of these. During this period, the doctrine of Christ was being corrupted, the mystery of iniquity was working, and Satan was laying the very foundation of that most stupendous system of wickedness, the papacy. Here was the falling away foretold by Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2:3." {DAR 355.1}

7. Paul foretold a falling away from the truth because iniquity was creeping into the church and into men's hearts. Who did he say would then be revealed? 2 Thessalonians 2:3

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8. Who does the man of sin represent? 2 Thessalonians 2:4, 9; Daniel 7:25; 1 John 2:18; 1 John 4:3 \_\_\_\_\_
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"God's Estimate of the Papal Power—By their treatment of His Word the popes have exalted themselves above the God of heaven. This is the reason that in prophecy the papal power is specified as the "man of sin." Satan is the originator of sin. The power that he causes to alter any one of God's holy precepts, is the man of sin. Under Satan's special direction the papal power has done this very work." {7BC 911.1}

9. The spirit of the Papacy, the mystery of iniquity, was already at work in Paul's time and in the time of Pergamos. Worldliness and backsliding had crept into the church. According to 2 Thessalonians 2:7, what had to be taken away so that the mystery of iniquity (the Papacy) could rise to power? 2 Thessalonians 2:7; Daniel 7:23-25
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10. Revelation 2:13 mentions the martyrdom of Antipas. Who does Antipas represent? See statement below.

"It is supposed that Antipas was not an individual, but a class of men who opposed the power of the bishops, or popes, in that day, being a combination of two words, anti, opposed, and papas, father, or pope; and at that time many of them suffered martyrdom in Constantinople and Rome, where the bishops and popes began to exercise the power which soon after brought into subjection the kings of the earth, and trampled on the rights of the church of Christ. And for myself, I see no reason to reject this explanation of this word Antipas in this text, as the history of those times is perfectly silent respecting such an individual as is here named." — Miller's Lectures, pp. 138, 139. {DAR 355.3}

11. What rebuke did Jesus give to Pergamos? Revelation 2:14 \_\_\_\_\_

12. Note: Let us now study the sins of Balaam and see how it applies to the church of Pergamos and us today.

13. Like Pergamos, was Balaam faithful to God at the beginning of his experience? Revelation 2:13; Numbers 22:8-12, 20
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"Balaam was once a good man and a prophet of God; but he had apostatized, and had given himself up to covetousness; yet he still professed to be a servant of the Most High. He was not ignorant of God's work in behalf of Israel; and when the messengers announced their errand, he well knew that it was his duty to refuse the rewards of Balak and to dismiss the ambassadors. But he ventured to dally with temptation, and urged the messengers to tarry with him that night, declaring that he could give no decided answer till he had asked counsel of the Lord. Balaam knew that his curse could not harm Israel. God was on their side, and so long as they were true to Him no adverse power of earth or hell could prevail against them. But his pride was flattered by the words of the ambassadors, "He whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed." The bribe of costly gifts and prospective exaltation excited his covetousness. He greedily accepted the offered treasures, and then, while professing strict obedience to the will of God, he tried to comply with the desires of Balak. {PP 439.2}

14. What sin led Balaam to turn away from God? 2 Peter 2:14, 15; Numbers 22:15-17, 32; 1 Timothy 6:10; Exodus 20:17
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"Balaam "loved the wages of unrighteousness." 2 Peter 2:15. The sin of covetousness, which God declares to be idolatry, had made him a timeserver, and through this one fault Satan gained entire control of him. It was this that caused his ruin. The tempter is ever presenting worldly gain and honor to entice men from the service of God. He tells them it is their overconscientiousness that keeps them from prosperity. Thus many are induced to venture out of the path of strict integrity. One wrong step makes the next easier, and they become more and more presumptuous. They will do and dare most terrible things when once they have given themselves to the control of avarice and a desire for power. Many flatter themselves that they can depart from strict integrity for a time, for the sake of some worldly advantage, and that having gained their object, they can change their course when they please. Such are entangling themselves in the snare of Satan, and it is seldom that they escape." {PP 439.5}

15. How did God rebuke Balaam for going against His will to receive money and honor? 2 Peter 2:15, 16; Numbers 22:31-35
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16. Although God wouldn't allow Balaam to curse the people with his lips, how did Balaam get Israel to apostatize?

a) Numbers 25:1 \_\_\_\_\_

b) Numbers 25:2, 3 \_\_\_\_\_

17. What does God's word say about illicit relationships and marriages to unbelievers? 2 Corinthians 6:14, 15; Genesis 24:3, 4
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"Never should God's people venture upon forbidden ground. Marriage between believers and unbelievers is forbidden by God. But too often the unconverted heart follows its own desires, and marriages unsanctioned by God are formed. Because of this many men and women are without hope and without God in the world. Their noble aspirations are dead; by a chain of circumstances they are held in Satan's net. Those who are ruled by passion and impulse will have a bitter harvest to reap in this life, and their course may result in the loss of their souls." {AH 63.1}

"Those who profess the truth trample on the will of God in marrying unbelievers; they lose His favor and make bitter work for repentance. The unbelieving may possess an excellent moral character, but the fact that he or she has not answered to the claims of God and has neglected so great salvation is sufficient reason why such a union should not be consummated. The character of the unbelieving may be similar to that of the young man to whom Jesus addressed the words, "One thing thou lackest"; that was the one thing needful." {AH 63.2}

18. What was Baal worship connected to? 2 Kings 23:5 \_\_\_\_\_
19. Note: Through heathen women, Balaam led Israel into sin and into Baal worship or modern-day Sunday worship. Similarly, the church of Pergamos gradually left the platform of truth because of fornication, unequally yoked marriages and the acceptance of Sunday worship. It's interesting to note that Constantine had decreed a Sunday law in 321 AD, a couple years prior to the time period of Pergamos. Though the church was faithful to God at first, many slipped into error. See the following quotation from the book *The Great Controversy* to confirm.

"In the early part of the fourth century the emperor Constantine issued a decree making Sunday a public festival throughout the Roman Empire. (See Appendix.) The day of the sun was revered by his pagan subjects and was honored by Christians; it was the emperor's policy to unite the conflicting interests of heathenism and Christianity. He was urged to do this by the bishops of the church, who, inspired by ambition and thirst for power, perceived that if the same day was observed by both Christians and heathen, it would promote the nominal acceptance of Christianity by pagans and thus advance the power and glory of the church. But while many God-fearing Christians were gradually led to regard Sunday as possessing a degree of sacredness, they still held the true Sabbath as the holy of the Lord and observed it in obedience to the fourth commandment." {GC 53.1}

"The archdeceiver had not completed his work. He was resolved to gather the Christian world under his banner and to exercise his power through his vicegerent, the proud pontiff who claimed to be the representative of Christ. Through half-converted pagans, ambitious prelates, and world-loving churchmen he accomplished his purpose. Vast councils were held from time to time, in which the dignitaries of the church were convened from all the world. In nearly every council the Sabbath which God had instituted was pressed down a little lower, while the Sunday was correspondingly exalted. Thus the pagan festival came finally to be honored as a divine institution, while the Bible Sabbath was pronounced a relic of Judaism, and its observers were declared to be accursed." {GC 53.2}

20. In Revelation 2:16, Jesus urges His church to repent. What would He do if they didn't repent, and what does it mean? 2 Thessalonians 2:8; Psalm 68:2; Revelation 19:13-15

"It is a perilous thing to allow an unchristian trait to live in the heart. One cherished sin will, little by little, debase the character, bringing all its nobler powers into subjection to the evil desire. The removal of one safeguard from the conscience, the indulgence of one evil habit, one neglect of the high claims of duty, breaks down the defenses of the soul and opens the way for Satan to come in and lead us astray. The only safe course is to let our prayers go forth daily from a sincere heart, as did David, "Hold up my goings in Thy paths, that my footsteps slip not." Psalm 17:5." {PP 452.2}

21. Read Revelation 2:17. Christ promises to give those that overcome the 'hidden manna'. What does the hidden manna represent? John 6:48-51

"The manna, falling from heaven for the sustenance of Israel, was a type of Him who came from God to give life to the world. Said Jesus, "I am that Bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven.... If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." John 6:48-51. And among the promises of blessing to God's people in the future life it is written, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna." Revelation 2:17." {PP 297.2}

22. The hidden manna represents Jesus and it also represents the literal food that the Israelites ate in the wilderness which fell from heaven (Psalm 78:24). In order to see Jesus face to face and enter heaven to eat this manna, we must eat it here on earth first. Practically, how can we have this experience? Deuteronomy 8:3, 6, 16; Matthew 4:4
23. Revelation 2:17 also promises that Jesus will give us a white stone with a new name. In Genesis 17:3-5, who had their name changed?

24. What did Abram have with him which is why God could change his name, and what does it represent? Genesis 17:4; Deuteronomy 4:13; Revelation 14:12