VV. 12-17

1. **Called the City of the Serpent in ancient times.**
   70 miles north of Smyrna; was the religious center of Asia Minor. Ephesus was the political center and Smyrna was the commercial center. It was little more than a castle on a hill before Alexander the Great. Zeus was said to have been born there.

   It had a gigantic altar to Zeus which had a foundation of 125’ x 115’ = 14,375 square ft. and 50’ tall! Some feel this altar is the reason for the statement “where Satan’s throne is.”

   Strong belief system here was that of Aeschalapius, the god of healing and son of Apollo. He was commonly referred to as the “Savior” which is a problem for believers.

   Aeschalapius was identical in the Greek mind to a biblical character called Nimrod, who according to tradition founded the original Babylonian religion at the Tower of Babel.

**Babylonian Religion.**

1. Worship of Nimrod’s widow = Semiramis and his posthumously conceived son named Tamuz, also known as the sun god. Other names for this same woman are Ashtoreth (Phoenician), Asherah (Canaanite), Isis (Egyptian), Aphrodite and Diana (Greek), Venus (Rome), Ishtar (Babylonian other name which is where we get the word Easter from).

   Names of the son include Tamuz (Phoenician), Baal (Canaanite), Eros (Greek), Horace (Egyptian), and Cupid (Roman).

2. Nimrod and Semiramis have this supernaturally born son, supposedly.

3. He supposedly died at the winter solstice and is resurrected the next day; winter solstice is at Christmas time.

4. This yearly cycle is celebrated by taking what is called a Yul Log; Yul is Chaldean for “infant”; and burning it thoroughly, and then in its place the next day have a brightly decorated tree representing his resurrection or rebirth from death.

5. His death was said to cause the winter and die off all greenery and his resurrection each year was the cause of Spring.

6. In ancient times his death would be mourned and his resurrection prayed for, out of fear that if he didn’t resurrect, Spring would never come. **Ez. 8:14**
7. Worship was sexual because once Tamuz resurrected, he would sleep with his mother, supposedly, and the offspring would include fertility for plants, animals, and people.

8. Many of our basic traditions go back to Babylon including the date of Christmas along with many practices of that season. The date of Easter and its name. Mistletoe was the only plant that stayed green all winter so it became a symbol of fertility; more than just kissing went on under it!

Religion was created in Babylon and resided there until Greeks conquered Persia. Then they migrated to Pergamum and followed the power and the money. At Pergamum the high priest first called himself Pontifex Maximus. When the Romans conquered the Greeks, the religious center migrated to Rome from which it never left.

The Pope now has the title of Pontifex Maximus, Pontiff, Pontificate, etc. How did he come to take this title and how did all this paganism get adopted into the church including celibacy of the priesthood, worship of Mary and the saints, etc.? The ANSWER is found at least partially in the age of the Pergamum church.

2. 313 A.D. Edict of Constantine which marked the end of the Smyrna persecution age and the beginning of the Pergamum age.

His Edict of 313 is also known as the Edict of Toleration made Christianity legal in the Roman empire. He repealed the persecution act of Diocletian and advanced Christians to high offices in the Roman government.

He exempted Christian ministers from Roman taxes and forbade work on Sundays and the killing of unwanted children. Crucifixion as a form of execution was abolished and he essentially assumed headship over the Church.

His immediate successor reinstated the persecutions and made Christianity illegal again, but the next guy made Christianity the state religion and made conversion to Christianity mandatory. He marched his entire army through a river and declared them baptized and Christian.

This resulted in the severe dilution of the Church; churches were filled with pagans. Pagan practices were adopted and holidays were put into the Church’s system. Pagan priests slipped into place as Christian leaders and this is where the whole idea of priests came into the Church.
Seven Letters to the Seven Churches, Lesson 4, The Church at Pergamum

This was the time when the Church became wed to paganism.

V. 12 “sharp two-edged sword” = Word of God = judge of our practices.

“Pergamum” is the Greek word made of two Greek roots: 1. “per” which means mixed or objectionable = Pervert, perversion, etc. 2. “gammus” = marriage = monogamy, polygamy, bigamy, etc. Pergammus means “Objectionable or Perverted marriage”

V. 13 “Antipas”; we are not sure exactly who this is. Legend has it that he was a dentist and a believer who was accused of disloyalty to Caesar and shut up in a hollow brass bull which was heated until it glowed red.

“Satan’s thrown”; he is not omnipresent and has a local address. It is called this because this was the seat of paganism at this time.

V. 14 “Doctrine of Balaam”; Balaam taught Balaak to involve the Israelites in paganism by alluring their men away with women, and then God would have to kill them when they mixed God’s people with the pagans.

V. 15 Doctrine of Nicolaitans; “to conquer the laity”; priests are above everyone with special perks and uniforms and unbiblical authority.

V. 16 Repent or else the sword!!

V. 17 Hidden manna; Jesus is this manna; all promises to overcomers have to do with some quality of the ministry of Jesus to us.

White stone; a run-down of all the stones that show up in a symbolic context and you will find that almost 100% of them refer to Jesus in some way.

Is. 8:13-15, Is. 28:16, I Pet. 2:4-6, Ps. 118:22, Mt. 21, Zech. 3:9 with reference to Rev. 5:5

“New name”; Does that sound strange that God will give us a new name?

This shouldn’t sound strange; God did it all the time in the O.T. (Abram, Jacob, Sarai, Joshua).