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SERIES: Revelation (God's Message To The Church)

TITLE: Program 10 – Satan's Throne!

FRIDAY

OPEN

There's nothing like faithfulness. And we live in a day and age of great infidelity, of great unfaithfulness. God is looking for faithful people, people who will not only be faithful unto death, but faithful to the Word of God, faithful to see that the teaching that is taught in a church lines up with the plumb line of the Word of God. We're going to see that today as we study the letter to the church at Pergamum.

PART ONE

As Jesus begins His message to the church at Pergamum in Revelation, chapter 2, verse 12, He describes Himself as being, "... the One who has the sharp two-edged sword." When He does that remember He's going to relate who He is to something that is going on in that church. And this time when He describes Himself, He's not describing Himself in a way that is going to cause them to find comfort, but in a way that is going to reprove them. He

wants them to remember that He is the living Word of God. And out of the living Word of God comes the sharp two-edged sword, the Word of God. Let's look at it, Revelation, chapter 2, verse 12. "And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: the One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this: 'I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name, and you did not deny My faith, even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.'" He says, "But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold ...," now watch the word teaching. And I would take and circle that word. Who have, "... that hold the teaching of Balaam." I would probably circle it in black because it's ungodly teaching. It's wrong teaching. It's teaching that goes against the Word of God. "... you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who keep teaching ...," circle it again, "... Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit acts of immorality." What on earth was going on in that church at Pergamum? Well what was going on was they were allowing wrong teaching, teaching that would even lead the saints to commit acts of immorality. He says, "Thus you have also some who in the same way hold the teachings ...," circle it again, "... of the Nicolaitans." And then what does He say? He says repent. He told the church at Ephesus to repent because they had left their first love. He's telling the church at Pergamum to repent because they're allowing the wrong teaching in the church. The church in Smyrna, the church that was suffering, He never told them to repent. They didn't have to repent. And they didn't have to repent because they were walking in fidelity to the Word of God and to the person of God. And they were so sold out to God and so purified by suffering that they were willing to be faithful even if it cost them their lives, even if they would have tribulation ten days, even if they would die in the midst of that tribulation because they knew that they had a crown of life. You know a suffering church is usually a pure church. But a church that does not suffer has problems in it. And one of the problems or the major problem in Pergamum was the kind of teaching that they were receiving. This is why

Jesus defines Himself, describes Himself as the One who has the sharp two-edged sword. Now that ought to ring a bell. And what I'd like you to do is write down three verses next to verse 12 and let's look at them. They're all in the book of Revelation. Let's go to chapter 1, verse 16 and let's see how Jesus is described in the state of His awesome glory and radiance. In verse 16 it says, "... and in His right hand He held seven stars and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength. Out of His mouth comes the sharp two-edged sword." Now go to chapter 2, verse 16 and see what He says to the church at Pergamum as I finish reading to you verse 16. He says, "Repent therefore; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth." In other words, those that are teaching wrong, I'm going to fight against them and I'm going to fight against them with the sword that comes out of My mouth. Now what is that sword? Well, let's go to the third verse I want you to look at. And that's Revelation, chapter 19, verse 15, Revelation, chapter 19 and its verse 15. It's talking about Jesus' second coming. It's talking about how, "... He's clothed ...," in verse 13, "... in a robe dipped in blood and His name is called the Word of God." And it says, "And the armies, which followed Him, are in heaven, clothed..." that's us. "... they're in heaven, clothed with fine linen, white and clean. They were following Him on white horses. And from His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may smite the nations; and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords." What is this sharp sword that comes out of His mouth? Well I want us to look at two other verses. And the first one I want us to look at is Hebrews, chapter 4, verse 12. "For the word of God is alive. It's living and it is active and it is sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit ...," In other words, it exposes what's going on between the soul and between the spirit, "... of both joints and marrow. It divides just like that. And is able to judge the thoughts and the intentions of the heart." Now I want you to go to Ephesians, chapter 6. And I want you to

go to Ephesians because in Ephesians he's talking about the armor of God and how we're to put on the armor of God. Then it talks about the one and only offensive weapon that any child of God needs verse 17. And he says, "... and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit; which is the word of God." So when Jesus comes and He says I'm going to fight against you, He's going to fight against those in the church that are teaching things that are contrary to His Word. He's going to fight against the nations and He's going to render them as nothing with that sharp two-edged sword that comes out of the mouth of God, out of the mouth of the word of God. "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God." So what I want you to see is He talks to this church. He's telling them I am happy with you and I commend you because of your faith. I commend you because you have not denied the faith. You have not denied My word. But then I'm reproofing you and I'm reproofing you because of this wrong teaching that you are tolerating, that you have there, that you have allowed to be in the church. Now you have to understand that this is not doctrinal differences. This is a teaching that goes directly against the word of God. And it is the teaching of Balaam. It's the teaching of Balaam, who in turn, kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel. Now Balaam was a prophet that was hired by Balak, who was a king, who was afraid of the children of Israel. He saw them and he saw their victories and he saw how they had defeated their enemies. So in the book of Numbers, in Numbers 22, in Numbers 23 and 24, in those chapters we see Balak, the king hiring Balaam and asking Balaam to please come and curse the children of God because he believes that if he can get him to pronounce a curse then God's children will be cursed. Now you hear people and they say, O, I'm afraid of curses or somebody's put a curse on me. I want to tell you something: Balaam could not put a curse on the children of God because God had blessed them. And no one can put a curse on you because God has blessed you. Ephesians, chapter 1, verse 3 says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Just as He chose us in Him, in

Christ before the foundation of the world, so that we might be adopted as sons of God and the enemy and the world cannot curse the child of God and have it amount to anything.” As a matter of fact, the curses will turn back on them, but they will not come against you. So you need not fear that. And you need not fear that simply from studying about Balak trying to get Balaam. Every time Balaam, and he wanted to curse them because Balak was going to pay him good money. I mean Balaam was a prophet for hire. By the way, Balaam’s name means a devourer of people. So Balaam wanted to devour these people because he was greedy, because he wanted the profit that would come from cursing the children of God. But every time he opened his mouth to curse the children of God, every time he tried to do that he couldn’t succeed. Instead, out of his mouth come the most incredible blessings. I mean you wouldn’t believe that this renegade prophet for hire could say such awesome words and make such beautiful promises to the children of Israel. But they did come out of his mouth, because every time he opened it to curse, instead he blessed the children of God. When Balaam couldn’t succeed in cursing the children of God, then he devised another way to get to God’s people and to bring God’s judgment on them, even as you see God’s judgment threatening those who are teaching this wrong doctrine.

PART TWO

You cannot curse something that God has blessed. So let’s look at it. It’s Numbers, chapter 23 and its verse 8. “How shall I curse, whom God has not cursed? How can I denounce what the Lord has not denounced?” You cannot do it. And so that’s why blessing came out of Balaam’s mouth instead of cursing. He couldn’t get to them through curses, but he could get to them another way and bring God’s judgment on them. If he could seduce them to eat things sacrificed to idols, if he could seduce them to commit acts of immorality, then God would have to judge them because those are direct acts of disobedience against the word of God, against the commandments of God. So watch what happens. I want to take you to Numbers, chapter 25. In

Numbers, chapter 25 it says in verse 1, “While Israel remained at Shittim, the people began to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab. For they invited the people, the daughters of Moab invited the Jews to the sacrifices of their gods and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. So Israel joined themselves to Baal of Peor, and the Lord was angry against Israel. And the Lord said, ‘Take all the leaders of the people and execute them in broad daylight before the Lord so that the fierce anger of the Lord may be turned away from Israel.’” God watches over His word to perform it. And if you and I do not obey, you and I need to understand that not only will that sharp sword come out and judge the world and judge the nations, but it will judge the church also because as 1 Peter says, “Judgment begins at the house of God.” And if it begins at the house of God, what then are the righteous going to do and what then is the world going to do? So we, knowing that judgment begins at the house of God, knowing that because we know the Word or because we have access to the Word, then we’re accountable to the Word and we have to obey it. Well I want to take us to one more verse that will just kind of seal it and that’s in Numbers, chapter 31. And in Numbers, chapter 31 in verse 15, Moses is speaking to the people. Now Balaam has already died. And he says, “And Moses said to them, ‘Have you spared all the women?’” He says, “Behold, these caused the sons of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor, so the plague was among the congregation of the Lord.” In other words, judgment came because what happened was, although the curses could not come out of Balaam’s mouth, he could teach the daughters of the Moabites to seduce the men and to get them to eat things sacrificed to idols and to get them to commit acts of immorality. As a matter of fact, if you go back to Numbers, chapter 25, in verse 6 it says, “Then behold, one of the sons of Israel came and brought to his relatives a Midianite woman in the sight of Moses and in the sight all the congregation of the sons of Israel while they were weeping at the doorway of the tent of meeting. And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest saw he arose from the midst of the congregation, and took a spear in his hand; and he went in after the man of

Israel into the tent, and pierced both of them through, the man of Israel and the woman, through the body. So the plague of the sons of Israel was checked. And those who died by the plague were 24,000.” What was that guy taking that woman into his tent for? He was taking that woman into his tent to commit an act of immorality. You say what is immorality? Immorality is sex outside of marriage. If you’re living with another person and you’re sleeping with them and you’re not married to them that’s an act of immorality. If you are involved in homosexuality, lesbianism or adultery, God calls all of those not a character of a person, but He calls it sin. It is sin. It is transgression against His holy law. Incest is transgression against His holy law. And so he’s saying that these things, these are acts of immorality and acts of immorality must be judged. Hebrews 13 says, “Marriage is honorable in all and the bed undefiled, but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.” And so what Jesus is saying to the church at Pergamum is this: Listen, this is what I have against you. I am reproving you because of this. I have commended you. We’ll look at that commendation later, but I have this against you. I am reproving you because you are allowing teaching, now listen, “... the teachings of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality.” And He says, “Thus you have also, some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.” Now what is the teaching of the Nicolaitans? Well there’s much debate about what the teaching of the Nicolaitans is. Some say, Iraneus, who was an early church father said that the teaching of the Nicolaitans was that you can live anyway that you want. They said that they became followers of Nicholas. Nicholas is mentioned in Acts, chapter 6, verse 5. And Nicholas is one of the ones that was chosen to be a deacon to minister to others. And church history tells us that he apostatized. And when he apostatized he taught unrestrictive indulgence. Others say that this was a sect that began by his statement, by Nicholas, that also indulged the flesh and became an early sect of the Gnostics. The Gnostics were the ones that were caught up in knowledge and thought knowledge was everything and it didn’t matter how you lived. And

they thought that they had a superior revelation from God. Or there's a third view and the third view is taking the word Nicolaitans. Nicos which means to conquer and laos, which means people; so Nicolaitans would be to conquer the people. Now remember He commended the church in Ephesus. And He says, "I am pleased with you because you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate." Now which ever it is, we know that it's wrong to indulge the flesh and it's wrong to teach that. But when we look at Balaam and his name, which means conqueror or devourer of the people and then we look at Nicholas, which means to conquer the people, it seems that the doctrine of the Nicolaitans could also be that hierarchy that puts certain people in the church in a superior position where they forget, as 1 Peter says, "... that we are all a kingdom of priests unto God and that we are to live a righteous life and that we are to hold forth the word of life and we are to live in a righteous way." Let's just take a quick moment and let's look at that scripture in 1 Peter, chapter 2. In 1 Peter, chapter 2 in verse 5, and remember he calls them a kingdom and priests unto God in Revelation 1. And he says in verse 5, "You also, as living stones, are being built up into a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." He goes on to say in verse 9 that, "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."