Christ's View of Local Churches-Lesson #3

Week of September 20th

Over the next 5 weeks, we are going to continue to look at the 7 churches that Jesus addresses in Revelation 2 & 3. We often look at church through our "American culture" filter. I would like to encourage us to think differently and ask some probing questions as we study these passages together.

The Message to the Church in Pergamum

12 "Write this letter to the angel of the church in Pergamum. This is the message from the one with the sharp two-edged sword: 13 "I know that you live in the city where Satan has his throne, yet you have remained loyal to me. You refused to deny me even when Antipas, my faithful witness, was martyred among you there in Satan's city. 14 "But I have a few complaints against you. You tolerate some among you whose teaching is like that of Balaam, who showed Balak how to trip up the people of Israel. He taught them to sin by eating food offered to idols and by committing sexual sin. 15 In a similar way, you have some Nicolaitans among you who follow the same teaching. 16 Repent of your sin, or I will come to you suddenly and fight against them with the sword of my mouth. 17 "Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches. To everyone who is victorious I will give some of the manna that has been hidden away in heaven. And I will give to each one a white stone, and on the stone will be engraved a new name that no one understands except the one who receives it.

Below is the map of Asia Minor and there are some photos of the ancient city of Pergamum.

Pergamum is the third city in Asia Minor to receive a message from Jesus. This city was located about 40 miles north of Smyna. It was a city full of idolatry with temples or alters to several Greek or Roman gods as well as several temples dedicated to the Roman emperors *as* gods.

1. We are told this message is from the one with the sharp, two-edged sword. This is not the image we have of Jesus, but it is true for this church. Do we need to have this image of Jesus today?

2. This church is in the city where Satan has his throne. We are told the church has remained faithful even when Antipas was put to death for his faith. Tradition says that he was put to death by being placed a large copper bull that was heated until it turned red. Do you find encouragement from the example of Antipas?

3. Even with its faithfulness, the church at Pergamum tolerated those who ate food sacrificed to their idols and committed sexual immorality. They also accepted the Nicolaitans who were among them and held to these same teachings.

Do you have idols in your life which compromise your faithfulness to Jesus the Lord? Are you struggling with sexual sins in your life?

We are told in vs 16 that repentance is needed for those committing their sins as well as those who tolerate these practices in the church.

4. For those who overcome, there are 2 promises:
    a. Some of the manna hidden in Heaven.
    b. A white stone with a new name that only you will know the meaning.

Can you imagine the day we all get our white stone with our name on it? We will no longer be known as Brandon, Cassie, Marcus or whatever name you have now. When faith becomes sight, we will all have a new name and only we will know what the name means. And Jesus is the one who has selected our new name for us!