

Church History : “Moral Compromise” 311 – 590 Revelation 2:12-17

“Pergamum was an important religious center for the pagan cults of Athena, Asclepius, Dionysius (Bacchus) and Zeus. It became the first city in Asia to build a temple to Caesar and became the capital of the cult of Caesar worship.”
“MacArthur Bible Commentary” p.1997

How does Jesus reveal Himself to the church at Pergamum? v.12

What does He know? v.13

What does He discern? vv.14,15

“Intermarriage with heathen women was a problem in Pergamum where any social contact with the world also involved worship of idols. Usually meat in the marketplace had been offered to idols earlier. . . Compromise with worldly morality and pagan doctrine was prevalent in the church, especially in the third century when Christianity became popular. **So compromise with pagan morality and departure from biblical faith soon corrupted the church.**” “The Bible Knowledge Commentary” Walvoord and Zuck p.936

What does the church at Pergamum need to do? Why? v.16

What are the overcomers promised? v.18

“. . .in the early church, a major turning point came with the conversion of the Emperor Constantine to Christianity, in 312. Until this time, the church was a dissenting minority, persecuted from time to time. Constantine ended persecution and offered the church support and official favor. The link between the church and the state was greeted enthusiastically by some. . .but others had doubts from the beginning: **First**, the adoption of Christianity as the state religion led to a massive influx of superficial converts from paganism. This resulted in declining moral standards and the adoption of some pagan and idolatrous practices. **Second**, the persecuted church of the martyrs became before long the persecuting state church.”
“Christian Thought” Tony Lane p.9

“Constantine represents the beginning of the Age of the Christian Empire. Courageous martyrs were a thing of the past. The Christianization of the empire and the imperial interference in the affairs of the church begins.”
“Church History” Bruce L. Shelley p.102

“Was it a change for the better? Yes, and No! Persecutions ended, for the Emperor now became a defender of the Christian faith, although he postponed his baptism unto very shortly before his death in the year 337. Churches were built for Christian worship, and bishops and preachers received liberal salaries from the State. The Christian Sunday was recognized as a day of rest on which ordinary work was forbidden and even Christian soldiers were permitted to attend the services. . .But with toleration came danger. It now became an honor and a distinction to be a Christian. It was only natural that many pagans turned to Christianity, not because their hearts were converted to the living God, but to gain position and promotion. The greatest danger threatening Christianity was realized when the emperor decided that he himself would rule the Church. . .Constantine called meetings of bishops and other Church dignitaries, and such meetings were then presided over in his name.”

“Sketches From Church History” S.M. Houghton pp.20,21

How and when did bishops become leaders in church affairs?

No one seems to know just how the single pastor, assisted by elders and deacons, became the widespread pattern within the churches, but we know it did. By the late second century, the unchallenged leader in church affairs was the bishop. . . (but) In the first and second centuries, Christians looked for proof of the Spirit’s power, not in an office, but in the lives of believers.
“Church History” Bruce L Shelley p.78

Thus, within 150 years or so of the death of the last of the apostles, two significant organizational changes found their way into the congregation: first, the separation between the bishop and the presbyters, with the bishop occupying the top rung of the hierarchical ladder; second, the separation between the clergy and the laity. Instead of all Spirit-begotten believers forming “a royal priesthood,” the clergy were now “recognised as the only priesthood.”—1 Pet. 2:9.

When and why did Monasticism begin?

“During the reign of Constantine the Great, when the days of persecution had passed, and the church and the world drew together, many Christians thought they could please God by separating themselves as far as possible from the world and living in seclusion. . .in small companies. The earnestness of these people may have been genuine, and their intentions sincere, but the whole practice of monasticism is contrary to the words of Jesus.” (Matt. 5:16)
“Sketches from Church History” S.M. Houghton p.28