

A graphic featuring a large, gnarled tree with two glowing circular openings in its trunk, set against a dark, atmospheric background. The word "GENESIS" is written in small, light-colored capital letters above the left opening, and "REVELATION" is written in small, light-colored capital letters above the right opening. The word "BOOKENDS" is written in large, white, serif capital letters across the center of the tree's trunk.

GENESIS BOOKENDS REVELATION

LETTER TO A WORLDLY CHURCH

REVELATION 2:12-17

SYNOPSIS

In Christ's letter to the church in Pergamum, recorded in Book of Revelation 2:12–17, we see a church commended for holding fast to Jesus in a city saturated with idolatry, yet rebuked for tolerating compromise within. Surrounded by false worship and cultural pressure, they lived where “Satan's throne” was, and some even died for Christ. Yet others quietly assimilated, following false teaching like Israel in the days of Balaam. The message is clear: we must live in the world but not be of it. Christ calls his church to courageous distinctiveness, communal repentance, and enduring faith with the promise of eternal reward.

SERMON OUTLINE

Main Idea: *The Church must be in the world but not of the world.*

1. **A Positive Example:** First, Christ commends the Church in Pergamum for “holding fast” to Christ's name in a very difficult culture to do so. They lived out the big idea of the sermon well.
2. **A Negative Example:** Second, Christ criticizes the church in Pergamum because there are some folks who have allowed too much of the world to creep into their life. Here we will examine the text, and then consider our own world and how easy it is to allow our world to creep into our faith.
3. **A Promise for Those Who Endure:** Lastly, Christ offers a glorious hope for those who endure in the difficult work of living in the world but not of the world. This hope is to remain at the center of our Christian hope!

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

LOOKING AT THE TEXT

Below are a few sample questions you can use to dig into the text. The goal is simply to get your group looking at the text and noticing the details. Do not feel that you need to use each of these questions. They are only here to spur you on if needed.

1. What does the description of Christ in verse 12 tell us about Jesus?
2. What specifically is the commendation (verse 13), and what is the condemnation (verses 14-15) given to the Church in Pergamum?
3. Verse 14 references a story in Numbers 25 (Balaam's fuller story is in the preceding chapters of the book of Numbers) regarding the sin of Israel and the plague that ensued. Feel free to dig into that text to explore more.
4. What does Jesus mean in verse 16 when he says "I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth?"

GROUP REFLECTION & APPLICATION

5. Which modern "idols" in our culture most tempt your heart toward assimilation rather than holiness? Why are they attractive to you?
6. Jesus commended Pergamum for "holding fast" to his name. Tell of a time where you experienced the blessing of "holding fast to Christ" in the midst of struggle or heartache. How did you "hold fast to Christ?" What was your experience like?
7. The letter calls the whole church to repent for the compromise of a few. How do you think about communal responsibility in the church? When does love require you to address sin or false teaching rather than ignore it?
8. Jesus draws clear doctrinal and moral lines with "the sword of his mouth." How do you determine whether your convictions are truly shaped by Scripture rather than by culture, personality, or political tribe?
9. The promise of the white stone points to future reward and belonging. How does fixing your eyes on that future reshape the way you endure social cost or suffering now?