

The Year of the Revelation

~ The Church of Pergamum, Part II ~

A Church of Compromise - The Doctrine of Balaam!

What led to this compromising life style?

The answer to this question is found in the Third Age of the Church -

- (1) After the Apostolic Age - Ephesus
- (2) The Age of Extreme Persecution - Smyrna (Pure)
- (3) Ushered in under Constantine when the church became married to the nation!

“Per” - Objectionable “Gamas” - Marriage

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The objectionable marriage of the church and the Roman government.

I. How?

Roman was in decline and turmoil at the close of Diocletian's reign. There were three people vying for the emperorship. One of those was a general named Constantine. [His mother was a Christian; his father was tolerant of Christianity.] When going to battle against one of the other aspiring emperors, he supposedly saw a vision where he saw the symbol of the cross and was told “In this sign conquer.” When he won the battle, he was supposedly converted to Christianity.

Through this experience, Christianity almost overnight moved from persecution to acceptance - even popularity. The church was eventually made the national religion and people were almost forced to become Christians. [Armies of Constantine were baptized in mass.]

The church became established and was “wined and dined” by the world.

The church was stained by these actions:

- (1) Priests of false gods (Jupiter, Juno, Venus) were on Caesar's payroll so they were baptized to remain there.
Problem:
 - (a) Temples made into churches
 - (b) Images to gods became images to Saints
 - (c) Same rituals practiced to worship God
 - (d) Bowed down same way, same ceremonies

Church had exchanged the “rags of persecution for the plush silk of the imperial place.”

Was Constantine truly converted or was this both (1) a political ploy and (2) a scheme of Satan to attack the church in a new way?

Constantine's conversion?

- (1) He kept all of his heathen and pagan superstitions.
- (2) He planned to combine the worship of Christ with worship of the false god, Apollo.
- (3) He ordered the observance of Sunday but identified as "The Day of the Sun."
- (4) Brutally murdered his eldest son.
- (5) Would not be baptized until right before his death because he believe baptism washed away his sin.
- (6) Still referred to himself as Pontifex Maximus (bishop, high priest, pope) - accepting the worship as a god.

Doctrine of Nicolaitans - "Nike" - "Victory;" "laos" - people (laity)

A group of people who exalted themselves above the people.

Establishment of a church where the clergy were exalted above the people.

Take part in offering forgiveness of sin, and being the interpreter of God's word.

This age of the church points to the danger of having a church consisting of people like Constantine.
"who became an unconverted and unbaptized Christian."

The Promise of the White Stone

The White Stone - In ancient courts white and black stones signified the verdict:

Black Stone - Guilty White Stone - Acquitted

Through Jesus our verdict is not guilty!!

Stones were also used like tickets or invitations to events like banquets or feasts.

Jesus says that those who overcome will be recipients of a personalized invitation to His banquet!!