

[Revelation 2:12-17](#) continues with the third of [seven messages to the churches](#) of Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey) during the apostle John's time. Each of these messages includes a specific word to a specific church, but there are also lessons applicable to the lives of believers today. In each letter Jesus brings awareness to the church then gives a to calls them to do something in response to this awareness... so it is awareness and then responsibility then a consequence ...it is the same method He uses in our own personal lives...He brings awareness then requires response...and give the outcome or consequence...

This third letter is to the believers in Pergamum (or Pergamos) follows this same methodology..., **Pergamum** was the Roman capital of the province of Asia. Located about 50 miles north of Smyrna. which was a beautiful and art-filled city in the province of Asia built along two tributaries of the Caicus River.

Pergamum was a center for the worship of Dionysus, Zeus, and other pagan gods. When Rome took over and Augustus Caesar established the cult of emperor worship close to the turn of the first century, Pergamos was chosen as the headquarters, and a temple was built in honor of Rome and Augustus, approximately 29 BC. Around 98 AD, under Emperor Trajan and his successors, Pergamon experienced a major building period in which massive temples and theaters were erected. The Temple of Trajan, erected in his honor to serve as a place of worship for the god Zeus and himself.

It is called here, "*where Satan has his throne,*" i.e. the place where Satan rules. And it is also referred to as the city "*where Satan lives...*" Where He has his headquarters.

Many scholars think that refers to the great altar of Zeus which was on the hillside overlooking the city. **It was a great chair, or throne,** forty feet high, and any citizen could look up there at any time and see what Jesus calls "*Satan's throne.*"

This was such a center of pagan worship it seemed to be the very center of evil. He will refer to Balaam...a prophet who spoke the words of God, so in touch with the Spirit world...so by inference Pergamum was rife with dark demonic spiritual influences and practices... not only was infiltrating the church, but the practice of the Nicolaitans and **the ways of Balaam** was being tolerated in the church.... **Some so called believers professed Faith in Jesus but mixed it with idolatry and sexual immorality as practiced by the pagans...** it was a troubled church....

Lets examine Jesus message to them **ESV REV 2:12** *“And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: ‘The words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword.*

- The depiction of Jesus holding a sharp, two-edged sword refers to the Lord’s readiness to bring judgment :
- What is the sword?

NLT Eph 6:17 Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

NLT Revelation 2:16¹⁶ Repent of your sin, or I will come to you suddenly and fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

NLT REV 19:15 From his mouth came a sharp sword to strike down the nations. He will rule them with an iron rod. He will release the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty, like juice flowing from a winepress. ¹⁶ On his robe at his thigh^[e] was written this title: King of all kings and Lord of all lords.

- He is the judge and ready to judge... Judge who? Those against God and his people and the ruler of them...

NLT REV 2:13 **"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.**

- He starts with a word of praise...In the place where Satan sits or rules...His city... you remain faithful to my name...to me
- **They had refused to budge on their view of His person.** They held to the truth about Jesus. They saw Him as the God-man, combining in one person, two natures, both of God and man.
- **In spite of all the corrupting influences around them, these people had held to that truth. Almost all heresies today flow out of a denial of the deity of Jesus.**
- **Second, they did this at the risk of their own lives.** Jesus says, "You did not renounce your faith in me, even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city -- where Satan lives." Antipas means "against all." We don't know much about this man, although he is said to be the first martyr under the Roman persecution in Asia.

But two terrible errors were undermining this church:

ESV REV 2:14 **But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put **a stumbling block** before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality. ¹⁵ So also you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.**

- **Jesus warns them to beware of those who talk Jesus talk and take part in Jesus' church, but on the side were part of such groups as the Nicolaitans and those who subscribed to the ways of Balaam.**
- **What did this mean? The word John uses is the Greek word "skandalon," meaning stumbling block or snare, To "put a stumbling stone or block" before someone is to be a tempter, to lead people into temptation, to "trip them up" or "snare them" into behaviors that go against their beliefs and their allegiance to Jesus.**
- **the same word he uses of Peter, as Peter tries to tempt him to swerve from his mission.**

NIV Matt 16:23 Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."

Let's look for a moment at the story of Balaam and Balak. Balaam, a "seer" from Aram, was "hired" by Balak, King of Moab, to curse the Israelites, who outnumbered him in battle. But God had another plan. Putting God's words into Balaam's mouth, he could only bless the Israelites rather than curse them. In his final prophesy, he told Balak that the Israelites would one day defeat him. Frustrated, Balak sent Balaam back to his own country. "Balaam, instead of returning to his country, stayed in the region and joined the Midianites. He suggested that the way to defeat Israel was to encourage the Israelites to be immoral and promiscuous."** In that way, they would curse themselves.

Balaam may have had to “voice” God’s blessings and declare God’s prophecies, but his heart was not in tune with the Holy One and Only God.

Then there were the the “Nicolaitans” What we do know from the church fathers is that they practiced unorthodoxy, or dissent from what was taught about Jesus and the faith.

- **In a nutshell from what the different early church father’s said about the Nicolaitans fell Along the same practices combining Christianity and their neighbors’ pagan religious rites, including sexual sin and promiscuity**
- **Some of these were infiltrating the church at Pergamum...apparently they had positions of influence...so to lead others astray...but were tolerated for some reason**
- **The people couldn’t see it. They were blinded by those who masqueraded as Christians, who acted like Christians, who talked like Christians, but who lived a double life.**
- **Others saw it but overlooked it...**

Let’s look at the example of a 21st century man.... A man who could talk the talk, behave in all of the ways the church admired and hoped for, and yet, he was not the man everyone thought he was. There were secret visits to ungodly places, sexual immorality practiced on the side or even in the open...continual run-ins with people and a history of slander, jealousy, gossip, envy..... Some of the signs even were there. But people excused or paid no attention. **This man became a “stumbling block” to people as his actions and words did not align, a mill stone rather than a living “stone” in the Temple of God.** *Matthew records Jesus words this way... NLT Matt18:6 But if you cause one of these little ones who trusts in me to fall into sin, it*

would be better for you to have a large millstone tied around your neck and be drowned in the depths of the sea.

- **Jesus tells his church ... Turn from this ...as there will be consequences... one Judgement**

ESV Rev 2:16 Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth.

- **Jesus tells his church ...Turn from this ...for judgment will come upon those...who practice these things and ignore these practices**

So repent.... return for therealso is a consequence of great reward

NLT Rev 2:17 “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

- **Hidden Manna is the food that came from heaven first to sustain the Israelites as they wandering in the desert for 40 years,**

NLT Psa 78:24 He rained down manna for them to eat; he gave them bread from heaven. ²⁵ They ate the food of angels! God gave them all they could hold

- **In the wilderness the Israelites called it manna...meaning what is it?**

Jesus answered them in the Gospels.....

NLT John 6:51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live forever; and this bread, which I will offer so the world may live, is my flesh.

*NLT John 6:58 I am the true bread that came down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will not die as your ancestors did (even though they ate the **manna**) but will live forever.”*

- **The manna is “hidden” in that it is given exclusively to believers in Christ. Only believers will reap the benefits of salvation. The unbelieving world that rejects Christ will never know the joy and satisfaction of faith in Him.**
- **The recipient of the hidden manna is specified as “the one who is victorious.” The overcomer is one who endures in his faith, despite trials and hardships.**
- **Overcomers are followers of Christ who successfully resist the power and temptation of this world. An overcomer holds fast to faith in Christ until the end.**
- **Demonstrating complete dependence upon the Lord Jesus through thick and thin**

***Secondly...The white stone** verse 17..... *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**

- *On this stone will be our name...which only Christ and we will know...*
- **Your identity is therefore defined by what the Lord determines. *And Since ones identity in heaven will not depend on what others think, the identity is immutable and eternal.***
- **our identity is this...**
- *NLT Gal 3:26 For you are all **children of God** through faith in Christ Jesus.*

- *NLT Gal 4: And because we are his **children**, **God** has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, “Abba, Father.”*
- *But we will also be given a new name This identity is not shared with others (Rev 2:17), but is your own identity as an individual.*
- **The reward will be the specific name that the Lord will give you. (Can you hardly wait?)**
- **And our stone will be part of the living temple in heaven...**

The heavenly temple is comprised of believers, who are the living stones of this temple (1 Peter 2:4-5).

NLT 1Peter 2 :4 You are coming to Christ, who is the living cornerstone of God’s temple. He was rejected by people, but he was chosen by God for great honor. 5 And you are living stones that God is building into his spiritual temple. What’s more, you are his holy priests.

White stone were familiar to the people of John’s time and culture...read

- **A small object called a “tessera,” white stone, , conveyed special privileges to its owner. The ancient Romans used tesserae as tokens of admittance to events in the arena....it was our entrance token into the Heavenly Temple...and the great banquet**

The best theory regarding the meaning of the white stone probably has to do with the ancient Roman custom of awarding white stones to the victors of athletic games. The winner of a contest was awarded a white stone with his name inscribed on it. This served as his “ticket” to a special awards banquet. According to this view, Jesus

promises the overcomers entrance to the eternal victory celebration in heaven. The “new name” most likely refers to the Holy Spirit’s work of conforming believers to the holiness of Christ

In summary, for the one who overcomes, the greatest promises of eternal reward in heaven are not "material," but are relational, which means that the greatest rewards are those which will provide us the closest and therefore the most satisfying intimacy with our creator and savior.

Today we are going to participate in the hidden manna of the body of Christ...communion...and secondly we are going to receive a white stone...something for you to take from here today to keep as a remembrance of who you are a living stone...whose secret name is know by God and will someday be revealed to you, the assurance of who you belong too... So after communion bring you cup up to the altar...set it down ...and receive your white stone to take and keep as a memento of your future entrance into the Kingdom of God , the temple and the great banquet ...

Today we take part in the hidden manna...just as he did with his disciples

NLT Luke 22:19 He took some bread and gave thanks to God for it. Then he broke it in pieces and gave it to the disciples, saying, “**This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.**”

²⁰ After supper he took another cup of wine and said, “This cup is the new covenant between God and his people—an agreement confirmed with my blood, which is poured out as a sacrifice for you

After communion Tim put these up together and leave up

NLT Rev 2:17..... And I will give to each one a white stone, and on the stone will be engraved a new name

NLT 1 Peter 2:5 And you are living stones that God is building into his spiritual temple. What's more, you are his holy priests.

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