

RETURNING TO THE ORTHODOXY OF THE CHURCH

(Friday—First Morning Session)

Message Four The Church in Pergamos

MR Hymns: 1273, 750

Scripture Reading: Rev. 2:12-17

- Rev 2:12 And to the messenger of the church in Pergamos write: These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword:
- Rev 2:13 I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name and have not denied My faith, even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.
- Rev 2:14 But I have a few things against you, that you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat idol sacrifices and to commit fornication.
- Rev 2:15 In the same way you also have some who hold in like manner the teaching of the Nicolaitans.
- Rev 2:16 Repent therefore; but if not, I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war with them with the sword of My mouth.
- Rev 2:17 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give of the hidden manna, and to him I will give a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knows except he who receives it.

I. In Greek *Pergamos* means “marriage,” implying union, and “fortified tower”—

Rev. 2:12:

Rev 2:12 And to the messenger of the church in Pergamos write: These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword:

- A. As a sign, the church in Pergamos prefigures the church that entered into a marriage union with the world and became a high fortified tower; these two meanings correspond to two of the parables in Matthew 13—the parable of the great tree (vv. 31-32) and the parable of the leaven (v. 33):

Matt 13 be omitted.

Matt 13:31 Another parable He set before them, saying, The kingdom of the heavens is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field,

Matt 13:32 And which is smaller than all the seeds; but when it has grown, it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of heaven come and roost in its branches.

Matt 13:33 Another parable He spoke to them: The kingdom of the heavens is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal until the whole was leavened.

1. The great tree is the equivalent of the high tower, and the woman with the leaven is the equivalent of the apostate church, which has married the world.
2. In the eyes of God, degraded Christendom is an evil woman who has mixed worldly, demonic, pagan, and devilish things with the good things of Christ to produce an abominable mixture—v. 33; Rev. 17:1-6.

Matt 13:33 Another parable He spoke to them: The kingdom of the heavens is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal until the whole was leavened.

Rev 17:1 And one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me, saying, Come here; I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits upon the many waters,

Rev 17:2 With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and those who dwell on the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.

Rev 17:3 And he carried me away in spirit into a wilderness; and I saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

Rev 17:4 And the woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and gilded with gold and

- precious stone and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the unclean things of her fornication.
- Rev 17:5 And on her forehead there was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF THE HARLOTS AND THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.
- Rev 17:6 And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus. And I marveled with great marvel when I saw her.
3. We must absolutely come out of this evil system and be separated to God, returning to the orthodoxy of the church so that the church can be a golden lampstand, having nothing to do with worldliness, idolatry, or Satan's saturation—1:12.

Rev 1:12 And I turned to see the voice that spoke with me; and when I turned, I saw seven golden lampstands,
 4. When we are attacked and are undergoing persecution, we should not be discouraged, for that is a strong sign that we are on the right track and that we have not been distracted from following the Lord's steps—cf. Heb. 6:19; 13:13.

Heb 6:19 Which we have as an anchor of the soul, both secure and firm and which enters within the veil,

Heb 13:13 Let us therefore go forth unto Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach.
 5. Throughout the years we have been preserved by being persecuted; we have never received a good name, because Satan will not allow us to have a good name unless we enter into union with him.
 6. "The history among us has been one of completely coming out of Christianity without compromise. It is a shame that some so-called co-workers among us have tried their best to compromise. They say that between the denominations and the local churches there is a gap, and they consider themselves as the bridge to bridge the gap. This was a suffering to Brother Nee, and today this is a suffering to me" (*The History of the Church and the Local Churches*, pp. 112-113).
- B. In Revelation 2:13a the Lord said of the church in Pergamos, "I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is"; Satan's throne is in the world, the place where he dwells and the sphere of his reign; since the worldly church entered into union with the world, she dwells where Satan dwells.
- C. Instead of dwelling where Satan dwells, we need to dwell in our spirit and in Christ, the One in whom Satan, the ruler of the world, has nothing (no ground, no chance, no hope, and no possibility in anything)—Psa. 91:1; 2 Tim. 4:22; John 14:30.

Psa 91:1 He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High / Will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.

2 Tim 4:22 The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.

John 14:30 I will no longer speak much with you, for the ruler of the world is coming, and in Me he has nothing;
- D. Since the church is a spouse to Christ as a chaste bride (2 Cor. 11:2), her union with the world is considered spiritual fornication in the eyes of God:

2 Cor 11:2 For I am jealous over you with a jealousy of God; for I betrothed you to one husband to present you as a pure virgin to Christ.

 1. Satan realized that persecuting the church did not work very well; therefore, being the subtle one, he changed his strategy from persecuting the church to welcoming her; this welcoming of the church by the Roman Empire ruined her, because it caused the church to become worldly.
 2. Worldly things are related to idol worship, for worldliness is always associated with idolatry; an idol in our heart is anything within us that we love more than the Lord and that replaces the Lord in our life—Ezek. 14:3; 1 John 5:21.

Ezek 14:3 Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their hearts and have put the stumbling block of their iniquity before their faces. Should I be inquired of at all by them?

- 1 John 5:21 Little children, guard yourselves from idols.
3. Mammon also stands in opposition to God; many idols exist only because of mammon; “you cannot serve God and mammon”—Matt. 6:24.
 Matt 6:24 No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.
 4. The church must be a golden lampstand, the pure expression of the Triune God, and must have no connections with the world, but after the Roman Empire had made the church a worldly religion, she became altogether impure, worldly, and idolatrous.
- E. In His epistle to Pergamos the Lord referred to “Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells”—Rev. 2:13b:
 Rev 2:13b ... and you hold fast My name and have not denied My faith, even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.
1. This faithful witness stood against all that the worldly church brought in and practiced; hence, he became a martyr of the Lord; to testify against the worldly church we need the spirit of martyrdom:
 - a. Witnesses are martyrs, those who bear a living testimony of the resurrected and ascended Christ in life—Acts 1:8.
 Acts 1:8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth.
 - b. We can be martyrs for the Lord physically, psychologically, or spiritually—2 Tim. 4:6; Rev. 12:11; Matt. 10:36; cf. 1 Cor. 16:12.
 2 Tim 4:6 For I am already being poured out, and the time of my departure is at hand.
 Rev 12:11 And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they loved not their soul-life even unto death.
 Matt 10:36 And a man's enemies will be those of his household.
 1 Cor 16:12 And concerning our brother Apollos, I urged him many times to come to you with the brothers; yet it was not at all his desire to come now, but he will come when he has opportunity.
 2. In Greek the word for *martyr* is the same as that for *witness*; Antipas, as a faithful witness, bore an anti-testimony, a testimony against anything that deviated from the testimony of Jesus.
 3. It must have been through his anti-testimony that in his days the church in Pergamos still held fast the Lord’s name and did not deny the proper Christian faith—Rev. 2:13.
 Rev 2:13 I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name and have not denied My faith, even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

II. The worldly and degraded church holds not only the teaching of Balaam but also the teaching of the Nicolaitans—vv. 14-15:

- Rev 2:14 But I have a few things against you, that you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat idol sacrifices and to commit fornication.
- Rev 2:15 In the same way you also have some who hold in like manner the teaching of the Nicolaitans.
- A. Balaam was a Gentile prophet who for wages enticed God’s people into fornication and idolatry; in the worldly church some began to teach such things (Num. 25:1-3; 31:16); idolatry always brings in fornication (Acts 15:29); when the worldly church disregarded the name, the person, of the Lord, she turned to idolatry, which issues in fornication.
 Num 25:1 While Israel dwelt in Shittim, the people began to commit fornication with the daughters of Moab.

- Num 25:2 For they invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods.
- Num 25:3 And Israel joined itself to Baal-peor, and the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Israel.
- Num 31:16 It was these who caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to act unfaithfully against Jehovah in the matter of Peor, so that the plague came upon the assembly of Jehovah.
- Acts 15:29 To abstain from things that have been sacrificed to idols and blood and things strangled and fornication, from which if you carefully keep yourselves, you will do well. May you be strong.

B. The error of Balaam is the error of teaching wrong doctrine for reward, while knowing it to be contrary to the truth and against the people of God, and abusively using the influence of certain gifts to lead the people of God astray from the pure worship of the Lord to idolatrous worship; coveting for reward will cause the coveting ones to rush headlong into the error of Balaam—Num. 22:7, 21; 31:16; Rev. 2:14; cf. 2 Kings 5:20-27.

- Num 22:7 So the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with fees for divination in their hand, and they came to Balaam and spoke to him the words of Balak.
- Num 22:21 And Balaam rose up in the morning and saddled his donkey and went with the rulers of Moab.
- Num 31:16 It was these who caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to act unfaithfully against Jehovah in the matter of Peor, so that the plague came upon the assembly of Jehovah.
- Rev 2:14 But I have a few things against you, that you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat idol sacrifices and to commit fornication.
- 2 Kings 5:20 Gehazi, the attendant of Elisha the man of God said, Now my master has spared Naaman this Syrian by not receiving from his hand that which he brought. As Jehovah lives, I will run after him and take something from him.
- 2 Kings 5:21 So Gehazi pursued Naaman. And when Naaman saw him running after him, he alighted from the chariot to meet him and said, Is all well?
- 2 Kings 5:22 And he said, All is well. My master has sent me, saying, Now at this moment two young men from among the sons of the prophets have come to me from the hill country of Ephraim; please give them a talent of silver and two changes of clothes.
- 2 Kings 5:23 And Naaman said, Please take two talents. And he urged him and bound two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of clothes, and gave them to two of his attendants; and they carried them before him.
- 2 Kings 5:24 And when he came to the hill, he took them from their hand and deposited them in the house. And he sent the men away, and they departed.
- 2 Kings 5:25 And he went in and stood before his master. And Elisha said to him, Where have you come from, Gehazi? And he said, Your servant has not gone anywhere.
- 2 Kings 5:26 And he said to him, Did not my heart go with you when the man turned from his chariot to meet you? Is it a time to receive silver and to receive clothing and olive groves and vineyards and sheep and oxen and male servants and female servants?
- 2 Kings 5:27 Therefore the leprosy of Naaman shall cleave to you and to your seed forever. And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow.

C. The teaching of Balaam distracts believers from the person of Christ to idolatry and from the enjoyment of Christ to spiritual fornication, whereas the teaching of the Nicolaitans destroys the function of the believers as members of the Body of Christ; the former teaching disregards the Head, and the latter destroys the Body; this is the subtle intention of the enemy in all religious teachings.

D. First, the Nicolaitans practiced the hierarchy in the initial church; then they taught it in the degraded church; today, in both Catholicism and Protestantism, this Nicolaitan hierarchy prevails in both practice and teaching.

III. “To him who overcomes, to him I will give of the hidden manna, and to him I will give a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one

knows except him who receives it”—Rev. 2:17:

A. We need to eat the hidden manna in order to be incorporated into the New Jerusalem as the tabernacle of God—Exo. 16:33-34; John 14:20; Rev. 21:2-3:

Exo 16:33 And Moses said to Aaron, Take a pot, and put an omerful of manna in it, and place it before Jehovah, to be kept throughout your generations.

Exo 16:34 As Jehovah commanded Moses, so Aaron placed it before the Testimony to be kept.

John 14:20 In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.

Rev 21:2 And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Rev 21:3 And I heard a loud voice out of the throne, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will tabernacle with them, and they will be His peoples, and God Himself will be with them and be their God.

1. The manna preserved in the golden pot was the center of the tabernacle, God's dwelling place in the Old Testament; likewise, the Christ whom we have eaten, digested, and assimilated is the center of our being as a part of the church, God's dwelling place today—Heb. 9:3-4; 2 Tim. 4:22; Eph. 2:22.

Heb 9:3 And after the second veil, a tabernacle, which is called the Holy of Holies,

Heb 9:4 Having a golden altar and the Ark of the Covenant covered about everywhere with gold, in which were the golden pot that had the manna and Aaron's rod that budded and the tablets of the covenant,

2 Tim 4:22 The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.

Eph 2:22 In whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in spirit.

2. Christ as the hidden manna is the center of the tabernacle; the hidden manna is in the golden pot; the golden pot is in the Ark, made of acacia wood overlaid with gold; and this Ark is in the Holy of Holies.

3. Christ the Son as the hidden manna is in God the Father as the golden pot; God the Father is in Christ the Son as the Ark with His two natures, divinity and humanity; and Christ as the indwelling Spirit lives in our regenerated spirit as the reality of the Holy of Holies.

4. The Son is in the Father, we are in the Son, the Son is in us, and we are indwelt by the Spirit of reality; this is the incorporation of the processed God with the regenerated believers—John 14:16-20.

John 14:16 And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Comforter, that He may be with you forever,

John 14:17 Even the Spirit of reality, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him; but you know Him, because He abides with you and shall be in you.

John 14:18 I will not leave you as orphans; I am coming to you.

John 14:19 Yet a little while and the world beholds Me no longer, but you behold Me; because I live, you also shall live.

John 14:20 In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.

5. The way to be incorporated into the tabernacle is to eat the hidden manna; the more we eat Christ, the more we are incorporated into the New Jerusalem, the ultimate tabernacle of God, as a universal incorporation—6:57; Matt. 4:4.

John 6:57 As the living Father has sent Me and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me.

Matt 4:4 But He answered and said, It is written, "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out through the mouth of God."

6. We should not be joined to the world; we should be incorporated into the New Jerusalem by eating Christ as the hidden manna.

B. Enjoying Christ as the hidden manna produces transformation:

1. The Lord promises the overcomer to eat of the hidden manna and to give him a white stone; this indicates that if we eat the hidden manna, we will be transformed into white stones for God's building.

2. These stones will be justified and approved by the Lord, as indicated by the color white, but the worldly church will be condemned and rejected by Him.
 3. God's building, the building of the church, depends upon our transformation, and our transformation issues from the enjoyment of Christ as our life supply.
- C. Every transformed believer as a white stone bears a new name, which no one knows except him who receives it:
1. Such a new name is the interpretation of the experience of the one being transformed; hence, only he himself knows the meaning of that name.
 2. Revelation 2:17 is a word spoken by the Lord to us; we should not take it objectively but as our biography:

Rev 2:17 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give of the hidden manna, and to him I will give a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knows except he who receives it.

 - a. We can pray, "Lord, I agree with Your promise. From now on, I shall eat You in a hidden way and be transformed to become a stone for Your building."
 - b. What a wonderful promise this is from the Lord; yes, the church may become worldly, but the Lord has promised that we may become a white stone for God's building.

Excerpts from the Ministry

THE CHURCH'S MARRIAGE TO THE WORLD

In the epistle to the first church, the Lord advised the church in Ephesus to repent and to recover her first love. We must believe that His advice was heeded, for the second church, the church in Smyrna, truly loved the Lord and suffered persecution and became a suffering church. According to the facts of history, during the first three centuries, the church suffered a great deal as the Roman government tried its best to damage her. Eventually, the enemy, Satan, realized that persecution did not work very well. Therefore, being the subtle one, he changed his strategy from persecuting the church to welcoming her. In the early part of the fourth century, Constantine the Great accepted Christianity and made it a state religion. From that time onward, Christianity became a type of Roman state church. This welcoming of the church by the Roman Empire ruined her, because it caused the church to become worldly. As we all know, the church has been called out of the world and has been separated from the world to God. However, by being welcomed by the Roman Empire, the church went back to the world and, in the eyes of God, even married the world. God considers this type of worldly union to be spiritual fornication.

Due to this marriage, the church lost her purity and became worldly. Because the church had entered into union with the world, many worldly things came into the church. Worldly things are related to idol worship, for worldliness is always associated with idolatry. The church in Pergamos firstly became worldly and then idolatrous. Satan saturated her with the world and with idols. As a result, the church became absolutely different from what God intended her to be. God desires a church that is outside of the world, having nothing to do with the world. The church must be a golden lampstand, the pure expression of the Triune God, and must have no connections with the world. But after the Roman Empire had made the church a worldly religion, she became altogether impure, worldly, and idolatrous.

Where Satan Dwells

In Revelation 2:13 the Lord said of the church in Pergamos, "I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is." Satan's dwelling place is the world. Since the church has entered into union with the world and has become worldly herself, she now dwells where Satan dwells—in the world.

Where Satan's Throne Is

The church in Pergamos also dwells where Satan's throne is. This also refers to the world. The world is not only Satan's dwelling place but also the sphere wherein he rules. Now the church is not only one with the world but even one with Satan. This is dreadful! The worldly Christianity of today is still in union with the world and is still being saturated with the thoughts, concepts, theories, and even the practices of Satan. We must see the seriousness of this.

The enemy, Satan, is subtle. His welcome is more serious than his persecution. Firstly, Satan stirs up persecution, and then, when this fails, he changes his tactics and welcomes us instead. We have seen this very thing in the past. Firstly, religion persecuted us, and then, changing its strategy, tried to lure us into compromising with it. This is Satan's subtlety. If we are snared by it, we shall eventually become worldly and not only be in union with Satan, but also one with him. The Lord has included the seven epistles in the book of Revelation that we may see the true situation of so-called Christianity and also see where and what the church should be. The church should be a pure golden lampstand outside of the world. The church must have nothing to do with the world and must not yield an inch to Satan's evil and subtle saturation. The church must constantly stand against this.

The two meanings of the word *Pergamos*—"marriage" and "fortified tower"—correspond to two of the parables in Matthew 13, the parable of the great tree (vv. 31-32) and the parable of the leaven (v. 33). In the parable of the great tree, a tiny mustard seed became a tree. This undoubtedly signifies monstrous Christianity, for Christianity has certainly become a great tree. In the parable of the leaven, we read of a woman who put leaven into three measures of fine flour. Leaven signifies all the sinful, worldly, evil, satanic, demonic, and devilish things. All these wicked things were put into the fine flour. In the Bible, the fine flour used in the meal offering signifies Christ as food for God's people. The great tree is the equivalent of the high tower, and the woman with the leaven is the equivalent of the apostate church which has married the world. The meaning of the Bible in this matter should be very clear to us all. In the eyes of God, Christendom is a great whore, an evil woman who has mixed worldly, demonic, satanic, and devilish things with the good things of Christ to produce a hellish mixture. We must absolutely abandon this great tree, escape from this high tower, come out of this evil system, and be separated to God, returning to His original intention that the church be a pure golden lampstand having nothing to do with worldliness, idolatry, or Satan's saturation. We are not in the place where Satan dwells, in the place where Satan sits on his throne. No, in the church there is no ground for Satan. Here there is no place for Satan to do anything.

In the first three epistles we see three churches—the desirable church, the persecuted church, and the worldly church. We certainly want to be a desirable church and a persecuted church, but we must refuse to be a worldly church. We must reject anything worldly. Be careful! After the enemy has persecuted you, his strategy may change. Instead of persecution, there might be a welcome. Do not regard this welcome as a good thing. Rather, you must fear being welcomed more than being stung by a scorpion. It is good for us to suffer persecution, opposition, and attack. But whenever people extend us a warm welcome, that is a most dangerous time. When you are attacked and are undergoing persecution, do not be discouraged, for that is a strong sign that you are on the right track and that you have not been distracted from following the Lord's steps. But beware of a warm welcome. It is better to suffer persecution than to receive a warm welcome. The epistle to the church in Pergamos teaches us that we should not be in union with the world in any way, sense, or aspect. We must have nothing to do with the world. During the past fifty years, a warm welcome was extended to us quite a number of times in a subtle way, but thank God that we rejected it every time. As a result, throughout the years we have been preserved by being persecuted. We have never received a good name, because Satan will not allow you to have a good name unless you enter into union with him. This is why we in the Lord's recovery are constantly involved in a battle and are continuously attacked. A war is raging all the time. The Lord's recovery is not carrying out a common Christian work. No, this testimony is a warfare.

THE TESTIMONY OF ANTIPAS

This testimony was with Antipas. In Revelation 2:13 the Lord says, "You hold fast My name, and

you have not denied My faith, even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.” In Greek, the name *Antipas* means “against all.” This faithful witness of the Lord stood against all that the worldly church brought in and practiced. Hence, he became a martyr of the Lord. In Greek the word *martyr* is the same word as *witness*. As an anti-witness, Antipas bore an anti-testimony, a testimony against anything that deviated from the testimony of Jesus. It must have been through this anti-testimony that in his day the church in Pergamos still held fast the Lord’s name and did not deny the proper Christian faith. Antipas took the lead to fight against the worldly church, pioneering the way for us to fight against the worldly church today. Whatever the worldly church was, had, and did, Antipas fought against it.

Holding Fast the Lord’s Name

In verse 13 the Lord says, “You hold fast My name.” The Lord’s name denotes His person; the person is the reality of the name. The church in Pergamos still held fast the name of the Lord, the reality of His person. The deviating tendency of the worldly church is to give up the reality of the Lord’s person. But in the Lord’s recovery we must fight against this, that the church may hold fast the Lord’s name, the reality of the Lord’s person, for eternity.

Not Denying the Lord’s Faith

The Lord also said, “You have not denied My faith.” The faith of the Lord denotes all that we must believe in of His person and work. It is not the subjective faith within us of believing, but the objective faith of the things we believe in. Because the church entered into union with the world, she began to disregard the Lord’s name and to deny the proper Christian faith.

Faithful unto Death

Antipas was faithful in his anti-testimony, even unto death. Because of his testimony against the worldliness of the church, he was killed and became a martyr. To testify against the worldly church we need the spirit of martyrdom. We need to be faithful for the Lord’s testimony against the worldliness of the church even unto death. (*Life-study of Revelation*, pp. 139-144)

THE HIDDEN MANNA BEING GOD’S PORTION

Eating Jesus and Enjoying Jesus as the Hidden Manna Being the Way to Overcome All Kinds of Degradation in the Church Life

The way to overcome all kinds of degradation in the church life is to eat and enjoy Jesus as the hidden manna, the private manna, for the inner life and life supply. In Christ as the Ark, we can enjoy Him as the hidden manna, as a particular portion for our life supply, to overcome the worldliness of the degraded church. We should get away from all persons and distractions to have a personal time with the Lord, in which we can enjoy Him in a hidden way. We can enjoy Christ in a public way with all the saints, but we still need a time apart from everyone to enjoy Christ as the hidden manna. We need to be in a private place to contact Him, to praise Him, and to enjoy Him in the holy Word. Many believers may eat only an open, public Christ, but we all need a time to eat a private, hidden Christ. Our experience of Christ should not merely be open in the meetings but hidden in the Holy of Holies, even in Christ Himself as the Ark, the Testimony of God.

Today Christ as the Ark is in our spirit, which is joined to the Holy of Holies. In our spirit we have the Holy of Holies; in the Holy of Holies we have Christ, the Ark, and within Christ we have the golden pot, the divine nature. Today God’s divine nature is in our spirit. Although we have the golden pot, the problem is that often we are far off from our spirit. We need not be quarreling or fighting with others in order to be out of the spirit. Even when we joke with the brothers, we are outside the spirit. Also, being religious is much different from being in the spirit. By being religious we are carried out to the wilderness. The golden pot is in the Ark, and the Ark is in the Holy of Holies, and the Holy of Holies is joined to our spirit. If we continually touch Christ in our spirit, we will enjoy Him as the hidden manna. The open manna was food for all the people who were outside the dwelling place of

God and were wandering in the wilderness, whereas the hidden manna is for the person who is remaining in the innermost part of God's dwelling place, no longer wandering in the soul but abiding in the presence of God in the spirit.

Ministering to God Directly in His Presence

If there is a distance between us and God, we may enjoy the open manna, but we cannot eat the hidden manna. If we would partake of the hidden manna, there must be no distance between us and God. In the Holy of Holies we enjoy something of Christ that all those who are far off from His presence cannot taste. Consider the service around the tabernacle in the Old Testament. The Levites served in the outer court, and the priests served in the outer court and also in the Holy Place, where they arranged the bread of the Presence, trimmed the lamp, and burned the incense. But when the high priest entered into the Holy of Holies, there was hardly any work to do. Here, in the Holy of Holies, the high priest ministered directly in the presence of God. Here, in the Holy of Holies, the ministering one enjoys the hidden manna. The hidden manna is that portion of Christ that we enjoy in the presence of God when there is no distance between us and Him.

The farther we are from God, the less service we have toward Him. The closer we are to Him, the more service we render to Him. Eventually, when we enter into the presence of the divine glory in the Holy of Holies, all service ceases. Here we have only the presence of the Lord and enjoy the hidden Christ, the hidden manna. It is here that we have direct fellowship with the Lord and know His heart and His intention. It is here that we can be charged with Him, with His intention, and with all He wants us to do. In this way we become a person who knows His heart and His intention. When we are such a person, His commitment will be ours. We have God's commitment because we are in His presence. We know that we are in the presence of God because we realize that there is no distance between us and God.

The hidden manna cannot be enjoyed by those who live outside of God; it is enjoyed only by those who live in the Holy of Holies before God's face. Those who stand on the Lord's side to maintain His testimony will be able to experience Christ as the hidden manna. They will have Christ as their life supply, but the flavor of that supply will be the hidden manna, which others do not know. Others will not be able to touch or taste the Christ that these overcomers experience and enjoy. If we seek fame or position, we will have no share in the enjoyment of the overcomers; we will not taste, touch, or experience the hidden manna. If we desire worldly fame and are married to the world, we cannot enjoy the hidden Christ before God.

When we become intimate with Christ, on some occasions we are so close to God that while touching the divine nature and partaking of it we are beyond the world, every situation, our self, and even our natural being. Everyone who enters into the Holy of Holies is with the High Priest. Christ, our High Priest, is in the Holy of Holies, and we also must be there. We must also be the priests in the Holy of Holies where the golden pot is. If we would be in this place, we must be beyond the world and every kind of situation. We must be beyond being bothered by people. When we are beyond all situations, good or bad, pleasant or unpleasant, we are in our spirit touching the Ark and the golden pot. If we would partake of the hidden manna, we must constantly be in our spirit touching the divine nature.

To eat the hidden manna is something absolutely outside of the world. While the worldly church is going down into union with the world, we are coming up from Egypt to the wilderness, from the wilderness to the good land, from the good land to the tabernacle, from the outer court to the Holy Place, and from the Holy Place to the Holy of Holies. After we have entered into the Holy of Holies, we must still dive into the Ark, touch the golden pot, and enjoy Christ as the manna hidden there. The more worldly the church becomes, the more we need to enter into the Holy of Holies to eat the hidden manna. If we would enjoy it, we must abide in the deep intimacy of God's presence. We must be in His divine nature where there is nothing worldly or distracting and where there is the intimate fellowship between us and God. Some of us who have had this experience of the hidden Christ have said, "Lord, I do not care for the world. I care only for You, Lord, not for any human relationship or friendship. Lord,

I am willing to drop every tie. Lord, now I am thoroughly free, and I love You from the depths of my being. I love You without anything frustrating me.” When we say this to the Lord, we are in the golden pot, in the intimacy of the divine nature, partaking of the hidden Christ.

A Memorial before God

The manna preserved in the golden pot was the center of the tabernacle, God’s dwelling place in the Old Testament. Likewise, the Christ whom we have eaten, digested, and assimilated is the center of our being as a part of the church, God’s dwelling place today (2 Tim. 4:22; Eph. 2:22). The Christ whom we eat as open manna spontaneously becomes hidden manna by being digested and assimilated into our inner being. The focal point of God’s building today is the Christ eaten, digested, and assimilated by His people.

The open manna, the manna that lay on the ground every morning, was for the enjoyment of God’s people in a public way. However, the omer of manna placed in a pot (Exo. 16:33) was hidden and was not for the congregation in a public way. The amount of manna kept in a pot before Jehovah was one omer, the same as the amount gathered and eaten by the people (vv. 16-18). In spiritual experience, this indicates that the amount of Christ we eat is the amount we can preserve. As we partake of Christ day by day, we are also preserving Him. The amount of Christ we preserve depends on the amount of Christ we eat. The more we eat Christ, the more we preserve Him.

The fact that the Christ we eat is the Christ we preserve indicates that whatever we eat of Christ will become a memorial in generations to come. The Christ whom we eat and enjoy will be an eternal memorial, because such a Christ becomes our constitution, enabling us to build up and even to become God’s dwelling place in the universe. Nothing of what we are, what we have, or what we can do is worthy of remembrance. Only the Christ who has become our constitution is worthy to be an eternal memorial. Everything else may change, but our experience of Christ will remain for eternity.

When some Christians are in eternity, they may not have very much of Christ to remember. Because they are not eating much of Christ today, they will not have much of Him to recall in eternity. However, if we are right with the Lord day by day and eat Him consistently, we will have much to say about Him in eternity. We will recall the wonderful times we had in the church life eating Christ and enjoying Him. Whatever we enjoy of Christ in the church today will become an eternal memorial. This memorial will be preserved in the presence of God, even in His being. This hidden manna is a memorial of Christ as the supply to God’s people for the building of God’s dwelling place. (*The Conclusion of the New Testament*, pp. 4178-4182)

Eating the Hidden Manna to Be Incorporated into the Tabernacle

The purposeful God has an economy, and in His economy He intends to have a universal incorporation. The word *incorporation* refers to persons indwelling one another, coinhering. God in His Divine Trinity is an incorporation by coinhering mutually and by working together as one; the three of the Trinity are an incorporation by what They are and by what They do (John 14:10-11). The Triune God in eternity past held a council (Acts 2:23) to make a decision that the second among Them had to become a man and pass through the processes of human living, death, and resurrection so that all the redeemed and regenerated believers of God would be incorporated into God’s incorporation to be an enlarged, divine-human incorporation. The processed and consummated Triune God and the redeemed and regenerated believers became an enlarged, universal, divine-human incorporation in the resurrection of Christ (John 14:20), consummating the New Jerusalem as the tabernacle of God (Rev. 21:2-3). The tabernacle in the Old Testament is a sign of the universal incorporation, and to eat the hidden manna is to be incorporated into the tabernacle.

Christ as the hidden manna is the center of the tabernacle. The hidden manna is in the golden pot; the golden pot is in the Ark, made of acacia wood overlaid with gold; and this Ark is in the Holy of Holies. The hidden manna, which signifies Christ, is in the golden pot, which refers to God. The manna in the golden pot indicates that Christ is in the Father. The Ark is in the Holy of Holies, and the Holy of

Holies is our spirit. Today our spirit indwelt by the Holy Spirit is the Holy of Holies. From this we can see that Christ as the hidden manna is in God the Father as the golden pot; that the Father is in Christ as the Ark with His two natures, divinity and humanity; and that this Christ as the indwelling Spirit lives in our regenerated spirit to be the reality of the Holy of Holies. This means that the Son is in the Father, that the Father is in the Son, and that the Son as the Spirit is the reality of the Holy of Holies. This implies and corresponds to the four *ins* in John 14:16-20. Verse 20 says, "In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you," and verse 17 says, "The Spirit of reality...shall be in you." The Son is in the Father, we are in the Son, the Son is in us, and we are indwelt by the Spirit of reality. This is the incorporation of the processed God with the regenerated believers.

The way to be incorporated into the tabernacle is to eat the hidden manna. The more we eat Christ, the more we are incorporated into the Triune God as a universal incorporation. By eating the hidden manna, we are incorporated into the tabernacle. The tabernacle in the Old Testament was a figure of the New Jerusalem, which is called the tabernacle of God. As the tabernacle of God, the New Jerusalem is the universal incorporation. This universal incorporation is God's eternal goal. The New Jerusalem is the tabernacle of God, and the center of this tabernacle is Christ as the hidden manna for us to eat. The way to be in the New Jerusalem is to eat Christ. The more we eat Christ, the more we are incorporated into this universal incorporation.

The world will perish in the lake of fire. We need to ask whether we are a part of the world or a part of the New Jerusalem as God's tabernacle, the universal incorporation. The Lord promises the overcomers in the church in Pergamos that if they eat Him, they will be incorporated into the universal incorporation, the consummated New Jerusalem. We should not be joined to the world; we should be incorporated into the New Jerusalem by eating Christ as the hidden manna. The way to be incorporated into this unique incorporation is to enjoy Christ, to eat Him, and to partake of Him. When we eat Him, we live by Him in this incorporation, which today is the corporate Body of Christ and which consummates the New Jerusalem. (*The Conclusion of the New Testament*, pp. 4186-4187)