

Int'l Training for Elders and Responsible Ones

(Fall 2016)

Returning to the Orthodoxy of the Church

Message Four

The Church in Pergamos

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 13:31 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.

Rev 2:13a I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; ...

- 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 90:1 O Lord, You have been our dwelling place / In all generations.

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 ...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:**

- 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 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.