



THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

"Wandering in the World-erness"

2:16-17

Revelation 2:16 Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.

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

Christians are often described as pilgrims and strangers on the earth. The world around us is compared to a spiritual wilderness.

Instead of a wilderness let's call it the **world-erness**. It captures more the sense of the real struggles we face. True, the world is for us a spiritual wilderness. *But it's an awfully developed wilderness!* There is something to tempt or seduce me everywhere I look.

The Christians at Pergamos were in the world-erness. Idolatry, immorality, and infidelity from the surrounding culture had crept in to

the church. Some two centuries later what was happening locally at Pergamos would happen to the church all through the Roman Empire. Constantine would legalize Christianity. In came pagan priests, rites, and rituals. In came immorality, idolatry, and infidelity.

In Pergamos of the first century, in the pews (so to speak), were folks promoting the doctrines of Balaam and the Nicolaitains. The true believers were in grave spiritual danger from the world creeping in to their church.

We are in a world-erness like no generation before us. Technology alone sets us apart from previous generations with regard to the world bombarding us and creeping in among us. The world doesn't just creep in to the church; it's right in our homes. We are in grave spiritual danger.

Our Lord, Jesus Christ, recognizes the danger. Here is what He wanted the believers to do at Pergamos, and what he therefore wants us to do:

Revelation 2:16 Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.

If the world has crept in to our church we need to **Repent**. Repent of what, exactly? Our own worldliness?

Perhaps. But in this case, because of what Jesus said next, I believe we are to repent that we've allowed worldliness to co-exist in the church and done nothing about it. It's not enough that I remain orthodox. I must speak out against error and get it out of our midst.

If the believers at Pergamos did not **repent**, then Jesus would **come... and fight against them** – against those who had crept in and were being tolerated.

There is a very strong distinction in this phrase between **you** – the believers – and **them** – the false teachers. The believers should do something about them or else the Lord will come and do what needed to be done.

What needed doing is to **fight against them with the sword of His mouth**. We saw in our last study that the **sword** which proceeds out of Jesus' **mouth** is another way of describing the word of God, the Bible. It is an exhortation to teach and maintain sound biblical doctrine. When necessary we expose false doctrine.

This is the second time in this short letter that Jesus is described as wielding His unsheathed sword. The unsheathed sword figures prominently in the story of Balaam (referred to in verse 14):

1. First, as Balaam was on his way to attempt to curse Israel, he was confronted by an angel with an unsheathed sword! It was only the faithfulness of his donkey that spared his life. The little beast saw the angel and refused to move. Balaam began to beat him, but God allowed the donkey to speak, and Balaam's eyes were opened to the danger confronting him!
2. Second, the plague that was destroying Israel's after their compromise with Moab was stopped when Phinnehas ran his sword through the Israelite and the Moabite woman in the tent.

"Get your fight on!" Is what Jesus was and is saying. If we won't fight, He eventually will come and fight. That sounds great – but it shouldn't. It should embarrass us.

If someone insults your fiancé, you rise to defend him or her. In your marriage you should always be on guard to protect your spouse. If you don't, **you should be embarrassed**.

Your relationship with the Lord is precious. It is to be guarded and protected. When folks start talking smack about Jesus with their false doctrines, rise up!

Jesus put all this in the context of intimacy by what He said next:

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

He who has an ear means the things in these letters are for any believer at any time. **What the Spirit says to the churches** (plural) means that the things in each letter are for any church at any time.

Him who overcomes is not a super-saint. It is a term that describes us as believers who maintain our spiritual perspective while wandering through the world-erness.

The average, everyday believer in Jesus Christ who stays separated from the world and fights against error can count on some things in the future.

He or she can expect **some of the hidden manna to eat**. **Manna** was the bread that fell from heaven which fed the children of Israel as they wandered in the wilderness for forty years. **The hidden manna** refers to the fact that some manna was put in the Ark of the Covenant that was covered by the Mercy Seat within the Holy of Holies of the wilderness Tabernacle.

In order for a Jew to eat **some of the hidden manna** he would be in the Holy of Holies. He would be looking not just at but in to the Ark of God. He would be in the most personal, intimate, even secret, relationship with God.

True, the **manna** represented Jesus. He is even now our bread of life. But this is a promise that in the future kingdom believers will experience Jesus one-on-one in a personal, intimate, even secret relationship. Thus, in the mean time, we should personally avoid worldliness and corporately keep the world out of the church altogether. We should be jealous over our Betrothed lover.

And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it." There are several suggestions as to just exactly what this **white stone** is:

1. There is a tradition among the Jewish rabbi's that when the manna fell from heaven it was accompanied by jewels like diamonds and pearls. We'd reject that as a nice fantasy!
2. It's true that in Roman courts white and black stones were used by the jurists. They would cast a white stone if the verdict was

- “Not guilty” and a black stone for “Guilty.” We certainly have been declared “Not guilty” by Jesus but I can’t see how a courtroom drama really fits in our current context.
3. Because the manna in the Ark of the Covenant is mentioned some scholars see this white stone as having a relationship to the stones the high priest wore on his shoulders or breastplate. Those stones had the names of the tribes of Israel engraved upon them. This is a better interpretation in that it tries to stay within the context. Instead of one priest going before God for the whole nation once a year each believer is depicted as having immediate access to Jesus for himself.
 4. In Rome it was not uncommon to give the victor of an athletic contest a stone with his name engraved on it. It functioned like a ticket or a token identifying you as qualified to get in to certain events, celebrations, and feasts. When the Harvest Crusade was held in Visalia those who were part of the team, or on the roster, were given a pin to wear – identifying them as ‘approved.’

I’m not sure if any of those captures the essence of what Jesus was getting at here. The real significance of the **white stone** is that in the future, after Jesus returns, each believer will have one and on it **a new name [is] written which no one knows except him who receives it."**

- being changed to bring change -
The **new name** is a secret known only to you and Jesus. Is it your new name? Or is it a new name that you use for Jesus?

It could be either! In the Old Testament, Abram was renamed Abraham, and Jacob was renamed Israel. In the New Testament, Jesus told Simon that he would be called Peter.

At the same time we know of at least seven hundred different names or titles for Jesus in our Bible. It is not unthinkable each of us could call Him by a unique and endearing name.

Think of this as a ‘pet’ name that Jesus has for you or vice-versa. Do you have endearing, pet names for those you love? A name that no one else is really allowed to use? That’s the idea here.

It fits nicely into the context. Remember Jesus was exhorting them to guard and protect their precious relationship with Him by fighting those who were defiling Him with their false doctrines. The whole letter is a reminder of our intimacy with the Lord.

Think of the **white stone** as an engraved piece of jewelry. Pam gave me a wedding ring; it's engraved on the inside with a phrase dear to both of us. **You don't know it and never will!**

Right now you are walking in the world-erness. Soon your Betrothed will return for you and take you home. You will see Him face-to-face. You will feast on Heaven's bread – not just spiritually but personally.

He will give you a precious token to keep for all eternity. On it will be a secret, intimate, romantic name known only to the two of you.

I think the Lord was trying to rekindle their romance for Him in Pergamos so that the seductions from the Balaamites and the Nicolaitains would not only be resisted but be completely overthrown.

You see, it's possible to be doctrinally pure but allow error to coexist. We need to be doctrinally pure and devotionally motivated to wield the sword.

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