

Prayer:

The book of Revelation ties the entire revelation of God through the ages together and brings it to the grand consummation of all things.

Slide # 1

The Old Testament prophecies are scattered throughout the books of Moses and the various prophets and writings. It would have been impossible to develop these prophecies into any chronological sequence of events. The value of the book of Revelation is not that it provides new information, but rather that it takes the scattered Old Testament prophecies and puts them in chronological order so that the sequence of events can be determined. – ***Arnold Fruchtenbaum***

I agree with this. The only thing I would add is that it also brings into view what was not revealed in the OT, and that is the current Church Age. It presents the flow of prophetic history in chronological order as revealed in the inspired outline of Revelation 1:19.

Slide # 2

Revelation 1:19 – Inspired Outline

Revelation 1:19 (NKJV)

19 “Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.

- **“have seen”** – Past (Vision of Christ) – **Ch. 1**
- **“which are”** – **Present (Church Age)** – Ch. 2-3
- **“after this”** – Future (Post-Church Age) – Ch. 4-22
 - - Scene in heaven – Ch. 4-5
 - - Tribulation – Ch. 6-18
 - - Second Coming – Ch. 19
 - - Kingdom – Ch. 20
 - - Eternal State – Ch. 21-22

After seeing the vision of the eternal Christ in chapter one John is told to write the things which he had seen.

Then in chronological order he is told to write “the things which are” – that is things that relate to the PRESENT Church Age. This is presented in chapters 2-3. And then when we come to chapter 4 we are introduced to the words, “After these things” – that is after the Church Age things just dealt with in chapters 2-3. Chapters 4-22 deal with the things which will take place AFTER the Church Age. Thus, the book of Revelation is spelled out in chronological order, tying the whole of prophetic history together and bringing it all to a grand consummation.

We are currently considering “the things which are” that relate to the present Church Age in which we live. In this section in Rev. 2-3, Christ addresses 7 local churches which are representative of all local churches throughout the Church Age. Application is here for all churches as seen in the repeated phrase, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

No two churches are exactly alike and Christ has a tailored message for each one.

Slide # 3

Christ’s Message to the Churches

Rev. 2:1-7 – Ephesus: Loveless Orthodoxy

Rev. 2:8-11 – Smyrna: Persecution & Purity

Rev. 2:12-17 – ***Pergamos: Tolerating Sin in the Fellowship***

Rev. 2:18-29 – Thyatira: Tolerating Idolatry in the Fellowship

Rev. 3:1-6 – Sardis: A Dead Church With a Reputation for Life

Rev. 3:7-13 - Philadelphia: The Church With An Open Door

Rev. 3:14-22 – Laodicea: The Apostate Church

If the church of today is anything like it was at the close of the apostolic age it generally had problems. There are only 2 churches out of 7 that are not rebuked. They are the persecuted church at Smyrna and the evangelistic church at Philadelphia. God help us to be among them. God help us to have ears to hear what the Spirit consistently says.

Today we come to the church at Pergamos and what Christ has to say to them. This is the **compromising Church that is married to the world**. It is a church that tolerates worldly unions in its midst. It is called to repentance, or Christ will deal with it severely.

Pergamos was located about 45 miles north of Smyrna, about 75 miles north of Ephesus, and about 20 miles inland from the Aegean Sea. It was very possibly founded in conjunction with Paul's ministry at Ephesus on his third missionary journey (cf. Acts 19:10).

Slide # 4



The cities of Ephesus, Smyrna, and Pergamos were prominent cities in the Roman Empire.

Pergamos had a library at one point that grew to have 200,000 volumes which rivaled that of Alexandria. It was the birthplace of Galen who was second only to Hippocrates as the most famous physician in ancient times. It was in Pergamos that Parchments were first developed and manufactured. They were animal skins that could be written on and provided a quality that surpassed primitive forms of paper. This city dated its existence back to the 5th century B.C. Today, the modern city of Bergama sits on the site of the old city of Pergamos.

But above all, what Pergamos was known for was flagrant IDOLATRY!

One ancient writer described Pergamos as “given to idolatry more than all Asia”.

Pergamos was wealthy and wicked. A 1000-foot-high hill stood directly behind the city and was covered with idolatrous temples and altars. The primary deities were Zeus, Athena, Dionysos, and Asklepios [Us-sklep-ee-owz].

The temple to the god of **Zeus** had an altar that eventually ended up in the Berlin Museum and was often visited by Adolf Hitler. Zeus was considered the god of power.

Athena was the god of victory.

Dionysus is the same as Bacchus, the god of wine, the goat-god. He is depicted with horns, but with his upper part as a man and his lower part as a goat, with cloven feet and a tail. It came to be a depiction of Satan, but the notion that Satan has horns, cloven feet, and a forked tail did not come from the Bible. Where did it come from? Well, it came from the temple of Dionysus, the god of Bacchus, the god of wine or alcohol.

Asklepios was a god associated with serpents was known as the “god of healing” which attracted people from all over the world. Worshiping this god involved **feeding snakes** in the temple. The sick could spend the night in the darkness of the temple where nonpoisonous snakes roamed freely. If a person was touched by one of these snakes, he was thought to be in contact with this god and would be cured. (This was a kind of **shock treatment** I am sure😊) On every hand, the serpent was visible and prominent in this society because of the prominence of this god.

The priesthood of this cult supposedly specialized in medical secrets. It was known for its famous Asklepios temple, which was considered worldwide to be a **healing and medical center**. Religion, snake handling and medical arts were combined for the purpose of healing people. It was medicine mixed with superstition and occultism. Even to this very day, the medical profession is associated with the symbol of the serpent, and this is where it goes back to.

Slide # 5



This serpent on a rod is the globally recognized symbol of medicine, used by organizations like the World Health Organization (WHO).

However, above all the other idolatry, which was rampant, was that it was most noted for **Emperor Worship**. It was the first city in Asia to have a temple devoted to worshipping Caesar, which was erected in 29 B.C. in honor of Caesar Augustus. This idolatrous mixture made this city an especially difficult and dangerous place for Christians to live in.

Revelation 2:12–17 (NKJV)

12 “And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, ‘These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword:

The word angel means messenger.

This letter was addressed, as were other letters, to the angel or messenger of the church, which was probably the one we would call the pastor. – **J. Vernon McGee**

This message comes from “He who has the sharp two-edged sword.” Christ was introduced this way in chapter 1:16. In chapter one, this sword came out of His mouth. It depicts Christ as JUDGE and EXECUTIONER! It pictures Jesus as the **judicial authority of conquest**. He is the **warrior God** who takes out those who oppose Him in keeping with His Word. This sword represents the authoritative Word of God in terms of judgment and deadly force. This is how it is used in the book of Revelation.

Slide # 6

Revelation 19:15 (NKJV)

15 Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that **with it He should strike the nations**. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

Revelation 19:21 (NKJV)

21 And the rest **were killed with the sword** which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.

This is significant because Emperor Worship was supreme here, and Rome claimed to rule with the power of the sword. Rome killed all who defied it. However, here Christ says He is the One with the two-edged sword, signifying power and authority to take out anyone that defies His LORDSHIP. All the way through these messages to the Churches, the LORDSHIP of Christ is prominent.

It is deadly serious to be in defiance of Jesus. Many people picture Jesus as a “good buddy” or “Divine Pal,” but to this church, He proclaims Himself as one who has a two-edged sword.

Imagine someone calling you on the phone and saying, “I am the one with the two-edged sword” – what would your impression be? Oh, this is my harmless buddy. Jesus is Lord, and if that means anything, it means accountability and absolute authority – deadly authority. Now thankfully, He speaks GRACE and PEACE to us as His people (1:4), and yet this message is a warning to the Churches. Even in the church, I fear there is so little FEAR of God! He is a God to be revered! To lose sight of that can be deadly!

Christ reminds them that He is the ultimate authority who has the power of life and death. He is the ULTIMATE ONE with the two-edged sword. Life and death are in His power. This is how He introduces Himself to this compromising Church. Those who fail to take Christ seriously tend to DIE. There is such a thing as a sin unto death (1 John 5:16). Remember, at Corinth, many were weak and sick, and many had died because of how they were living (1 Cor. 11:30). The One with the two-edged sword is to be revered! Hear what the Spirit says!

13 “I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

To each church Christ begins with “I know”. And typically, if there is something to commend them on, He starts with commendation as He does here.

He knew their environment, the oppressive atmosphere, the wicked context where Satan was pretty much having his way.

It is comforting to know that, whatever your oppressive context, the Lord knows where you dwell and what you are going through.

As a key center of idolatry, this city is portrayed as the **headquarters for Satanic activity**. It is a stronghold for Satanic influence and, therefore, persecution of the church. Jesus referred to it as the place of Satan’s throne. Christ knew their very dangerous and difficult circumstances. They were right in the center of pagan worship in the midst of Satanic activity, where Satan’s throne was located.

Satan’s thing is DECEPTION. In Revelation 12:9, it says that he “deceives the whole world.” And he largely does it through false religion.

This defined Pergamos! It was the capital of false religion in the known world – the very place of Satan’s throne. This was his base of operations in the world. This was his power center, his place of concentrated control.

Note: Satan is **not in hell** at this point! No, he wanders about freely like a lion seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8), and he has certain strongholds related to key areas as seen here at Pergamos (cf. Daniel 10).

Where Satan has great influence and power, persecution of the church is sure to follow, and so it was at Pergamos.

But Christ commends the church, saying, “***And you hold fast My name***”. In spite of the oppressive darkness they had held fast to the **Person of Christ**. The Name of Christ represents His Person – WHO He is.

Christ has many names, but often His formal full name is said to be Lord Jesus Christ.

Slide # 7

Lord (God-Master)

Jesus (Mediator/Savior)

Christ (Messiah – Prophesied Chosen One)

To hold fast to Christ’s name is to hold fast to Who He is as the Lord Jesus Christ.

They had not compromised their loyalty to the person of Christ. Many surmise that this very probably means they had not said “**Caesar is Lord**” as commanded by the local law. Remember, “***Emperor Worship***” was prominent here. As one commentator said, in the rest of the Roman Empire, citizens once a year were compelled to acknowledge Caesar as Lord, but here in Pergamos, that was an everyday reality. But they held fast to the LORDSHIP of Jesus, refusing to acknowledge Caesar as their Lord.

Society considered Zeus to be the “savior-god,” but they refused to acknowledge Zeus as Savior! Rather, they insisted that Jesus alone is Lord and Savior. They were holding fast to the TRUTH of the person of Jesus.

He alone was recognized as their God – their Lord – not any of the idol deities. Worship was reserved for Jesus alone!

Jesus says to them and you, “did not deny My faith”. Note the linkage: They held fast to Christ’s name, and they did not deny His faith. Note Christ says, “My name” and “My faith”. This is all centered in Jesus. His NAME is WHO He is and His faith is faith in Him for Who He is. This is a package! The object of our faith is the PERSON of Christ!

When Christ says, “My faith” He is talking about faith in the gospel of Christ which presents Him for WHO He is as Lord and Savior! The faith of Christ is the gospel. It is the truth of Who Christ is and What He has done for us. This church stood strong on their FAITH in Jesus in spite of pressure to compromise and persecution. They did not look in dependence on any idol or any other supposed higher power. Their faith was in Jesus ALONE!

And it got real intense: Jesus continues, “**even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.**”

The oppression reached the point where one of their members named Antipas was killed for his faith. Yet, even in that context, they continued to hold fast to their faith in Christ.

We know nothing else of Antipas other than he died because of his stand for the Lord Jesus Christ.

The name Antipas literally means “against all”. Some suggest that this suggests that he was willing to stand for the truth of Christ even if no one else would. Certainly he was willing to die for his faith – that much is for sure.

Christ calls him, “My faithful martyr.” Martyr is the word elsewhere translated as “witness” (cf. Acts 1:8). It came to be used of those who died because of their testimony for Jesus Christ. However, this same word is found in Acts 1:8 in relation to “the Great Commission” as stated in Acts.

Slide # 8

Acts 1:8 (NKJV)

8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be **witnesses** [**martyrs**] to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

We are empowered to be martyrs (if necessary) for Christ. This suggests that being faithful witnesses in this life is often dangerous and will not be well accepted by the world. Perhaps this is one reason so few witness regularly or boldly. There is a price that comes with it.

Tradition says that Antipas he was slowly roasted to death in a bronze kettle during the reign of Domitian in 92 AD who ruled Rome from 81-96 AD. He severely persecuted the Christians on his way out in 95-96.

Note the double emphasis on where this church dwells: “where Satan’s throne is” and then again “where Satan dwells”. There is a huge emphasis here on Satan! They lived in Satan’s prime territory. This was a very wicked and oppressive place, which manifested itself in persecution and the killing of God’s people.

Satan took his best shot from without, but the church HELD FAST. But Satan does not give up easily and often will come with another strategy if the first one is not successful. In this case, he attacked from within the professing church, and there he found the church to be vulnerable.

Often Satan’s most successful attacks are from within instead of from without. Satan is not fleeing from the church – he is joining it. He does his best work from inside! Note that!

Now, wouldn’t you think that if a church were strong in standing in the face of severe persecution, it would also be strong in standing against compromise from within? This church proves that is not necessarily so.

Sometimes it is easier to deal with outside pressures than it is to deal with people in the church that you know – that are your friends – that claim to be “Christians” with you, but in fact are radically compromising the faith.

The church at Pergamos was a church in which many people held to “personal” convictions and took “personal” stands for Christ, and yet they were GUILTY of tolerating false doctrine and flagrant sin in the body.

At this point, Christ goes from commending them to dealing with COMPROMISE and SIN in the church. Their stand against outside persecution was commendable, but within the church, there was unacceptable COMPROMISE and TOLERANCE of sin.

14 But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality.

Christ has a problem with who is there! You say, "Isn't everyone welcome in the church?" Well, yes, on a visitor status, but you can't just park here and bring sin into the camp.

We need to realize that Jesus does not necessarily recognize these "Balaamites" and "Nicolaitans" as true believers. Rather, they are spoken of as being there with their corrupting influence when they shouldn't be there. Balaam was clearly a FALSE prophet. He claimed to represent God but really he was all about himself.

The devil comes to church and he brings his people with him. Some people are so naive as to think that when Christ is addressing the churches, this means that all in the picture are saved. But as every pastor knows, in the church assembly, there are both wheat and tares. There are possessors and professors. Now it is true that all who are part of BODY of Christ are true believers, but there are some in the mix that John calls LIARS.

I take it that these false teachers represent Satan's people who infiltrate the church to corrupt it. And the church needs to stand against this. We need to earnestly contend for the faith (Jude 3). We need to be discerning. There is a place for building bridges, but there is also a place for building walls! In this case, they needed some walls to keep the false teachers out.

Today many think that being **LOVING means you just tolerate** whatever sin comes into the body. But what love for God? What about love for God's truth? We are told that if we really loved people, we would **not judge** them, meaning you don't discern and you don't take a stand. They think love means just skating along to get along. Thus, the church in many sectors has lost its HOLY SEPARATED status. The Church is a holy family. We have holy standards. Jesus is LORD here!

Christ's problem was with **those who were THERE**. Certain people need to **be put out of** the church. We cannot just be indifferent and lovingly "tolerant" of flagrant sin in the body. We must take a stand or Christ will have a problem with us.

Christ had a problem with the church at Pergamos, allowing and tolerating those in the church who held to the doctrine of Balaam.

To understand this, we have to go back to the **OT to the time of Moses**. (cf. Num. 22-25, 31) There we find a king by the name of Balak who was king over the Moabites. They were terrified of Israel and the advancement they were making, so he called on this so-called Gentile prophet (from Midian, south of Moab by the Dead Sea) by the name of Balaam to come and curse Israel. Lots of **money was promised** to Balaam for his “cursing ministry”.

Although God made it clear Balaam shouldn't go he wanted the money, and so he went. Once he got there, God would not allow him to CURSE Israel, although he wanted to. In the end, Baalam, in effect, gave this counsel to Balak: These people can't be cursed, but if you allow your women to entice the Jewish men, they will intermarry and then get involved in idolatry, and then God will judge them. This will cripple them as a people, and you will have what you want: a devastated people. (cf. Num. 25:1-4, 9).

The Bible speaks of ...

Slide # 9

The way of Balaam: Is the idea of being motivated by covetousness and greed, where one uses ministry for personal profit (2 Pet. 2:15).

The error of Balaam: Is the pursuit of one's own agenda instead of yielding to God's will (Jude 11).

The doctrine of Balaam: This is the teaching that does away with biblical separation regarding marriage, immorality, and idolatry (Rev. 2:14). The doctrine of Balaam was: *If you can't curse them, then corrupt them.*

In the Bible, immorality and idolatry are often linked. Idolatry is when anything is placed before God.

The Pergamos culture was so filled with idolatry and immorality that unless one had a CLEAN BREAK with the culture, they would probably fall back into it. These people in the church holding to the doctrine of Baalam refused to break and separate from Pagan Feasts and all that it involved. And yet they also wanted to be part of the church.

A major part of **community events** was the constant ongoing of idolatrous feasts that were often held in pagan temples. These feasts were not just a matter of eating but also of **worshiping feasts involving** the worship of false gods and often licentious and sexual immorality was involved at these events.

The real **issue was not simply eating** the meat. The meat in and of itself, whether offered to idols or not, was not the issue as Paul states in 1 Corinthians (cf. 1 Cor. 8, 10). The problem was involvement in idolatrous worship feasts and **participating in such events**. Entering into and being a part of a worship festival such as this was, in fact, to involve oneself in idolatry and demon worship.

Slide # 10

1 Corinthians 10:20 (NKJV)

20 Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice **they sacrifice to demons** and not to God, and **I do not want you to have fellowship with demons.**

By way of application, Christians should refuse to participate in religious services that are, in fact, IDOLATROUS. Sometimes it is appropriate to attend a wedding or funeral, etc., as a spectator, but at the same time not to participate in aspects that are clearly idolatrous.

God's people are to have nothing whatsoever to do with either idolatry or immorality, and as I say, they often go together.

When the church doesn't take a stand regarding intermarriage or immorality, it inevitably results in idolatry of one kind or another. Any form of worship with those who hold to another gospel or pagan beliefs is a form of practicing the doctrine of Baalam. When the church tolerates intermarriage with unbelievers or immorality amongst its members with those of the world, it is tolerating a form of the doctrine of Baalam. This involves the sort of compromise Christ is talking about here. It involves tolerating Baalam's doctrine.

Remember, Balaam's plot was to corrupt the people through unbiblical unions (intermarriage, immorality), which entangle them in false religion – that is, idolatry. Many a professing Christian has either gotten involved sexually or married someone holding to false doctrine, which results in their testimony being destroyed and doing great damage to the church. This doctrine of Balaam in seducing God's people is still very effective.

Sexual sin is a very powerful tool to draw people away from the Lord and their separated calling (cf. Acts 15:20; 1 Cor. 5:9-11; 2 Cor. 6:14-18).

Slide # 11

2 Corinthians 6:14 (NKJV)

14 Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?

1 Thessalonians 4:3 (NKJV)

3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality;

1 John 5:21 (NKJV)

21 Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

Not only does Jesus demand that we ourselves live sexually pure lives but He demands that we **not tolerate immorality and idolatry in the church.** We must take a stand here! Tolerating immorality/idolatry is like a cancer left unchecked. It grows until it kills you! As Paul said to the Corinthians, "Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?" (1 Cor. 5:6).

This is always challenging: People come and say we have found someone and we want to get married in the church? A few questions: Are you living together? Are you sexually active? Are you both believers? People just expect you to go along with their compromise, but if we do so the church fills up with Balaamites and the whole church is stumbled.

As a young man the very first disciplinary situation we had in our church was over this issue. This young couple wanted to get married. I sat them down and asked what was their your understanding about how you get to heaven? I asked her first (as she was not a member of our church). She gave a total works answer. He, of course, answered correctly. She then claimed to change her mind and agree with him about salvation by grace. However, the next week she came back and admitted she believed in a works salvation. I then looked at him and said, "Then you cannot marry her." He said, "I am going to marry her anyway." And thus began the first disciplinary situation we had in the church!

The church at Pergamos represents a church that becomes married to the world. It is a church that tolerates immorality and idolatry. It goes along with it without taking a stand.

This is reflective of what happened to the church under Constantine.

The story of Constantine:

After the death of Diocletian, there was a rivalry between Constantine and Maxentius to see who would rule the Roman Empire. Tradition says that the night before the battle that would decide the issue, Constantine saw a vision in the sky in the shape of a cross bearing the inscription “***in this sign conquer***”. That night, Constantine vowed to become a Christian and join the church if he won the battle.

Indeed, he won the battle and declared himself a Christian. In fact, he went on to declare Christianity the official state religion.

There were wholesale baptisms of thousands of soldiers. Constantine presided over church councils and was the recognized head of the church. The church overnight went from being persecuted to being politically correct. The Church was now married to the world.

There is no real evidence that Constantine was ever truly born again, and this MARRIAGE of the Church and State resulted in the corruption of the church, which resulted in the development of the ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH, plunging history into a thousand years of “Dark Ages” (c. 500-1500 AD)

From the very beginning, the “Roman Church” has essentially been a mixture of politics and Christianity. Spiritually speaking, it essentially represents what happens when the doctrine of Baalam is allowed to have its way in the church. It corrupts, devastates, and stumbles the church by way of unbiblical UNIONS.

We must not allow ourselves to be unequally yoked with unbelievers.
We must not tolerate immorality.
We must not make room for idolatry.

If we do, Jesus is speaking directly to us here, where He says in verse 17, “Repent, or else...”.

15 “Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.

It seems the doctrine of Balaam and the doctrine of the Nicolaitans were pretty closely related. We were introduced to the Nicolaitans at the church at Ephesus in 2:6.

Some think that, based on the etymology of the word “Nicolaitan,” this teaching pushed for the idea of a clerical hierarchy. Perhaps, but more likely is that this teaching said that grace gives a license to sin.

Many of the early church fathers said that the Nicolaitans were followers of Nicolaus of Antioch, who was one of the original 7 assistants to the apostles as seen in Acts 6:5. Church history says that later Nicolaus apostatized and that his followers became promoters of licentious antinomianism, which says GRACE means you can live any way you want to. People like Irenaeus, Tertullian, Jerome, Augustine and Eusebius, all said the same basic thing.

Irenaeus, a luminary in the second-century church said, “They lived lives of unrestrained indulgence” (Against Heresies 1.26.3). Clement of Alexandria said, “They abandon themselves to pleasure like goats...leading a life of self-indulgence. – **Mark Hitchcock**

It is sin not to hate what God hates. We are to love what God loves and hate what He hates.

Slide # 12

Psalm 97:10 (NKJV)

10 You who love the LORD, hate evil!

God hates the teaching that overlooks or soft pedals the sin of immorality and sensuous living such as defined the Nicolaitans. Today, we have Christian leaders who downplay Christian separation. Some say it's okay to, in effect, affirm gay marriage. They say feel free to go to the wedding and even take a gift. We try so hard to be affirming and accepting that we end up compromising our separated calling – our holy calling. We are a long way from getting our heads cut off for taking a stand for righteousness like John the Baptist did.

The most common word for the Christian is the word holy, which means “different” or “separate.” – **David Jeremiah**

This compromise of tolerating sin in the church was so serious that Christ said:

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

Christ says, “Repent or else...”. The Greek word repent (metanoeo) means to have a change of mind that results in a change of behavior. If it doesn't affect your behavior its not true repentance.

In this case, Christ is telling them they better change mind about tolerating immorality, intermarriage, and idolatry in the church or there will be deadly consequences! Christ is saying, “**You better get them out of the church.**” They are not to be there!

In reality, Church Discipline is a very gracious and loving thing. It provides steps before God directly intervenes. When Christ suddenly intervenes with the sword of His mouth, things get deadly serious in a hurry.

Slide # 13

1 Corinthians 11:30-31 (NKJV)

30 For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep.

31 For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged.

If they don't repent, Christ is threatening to come to them suddenly in judgment. He is calling on them to REPENT or they can expect IMMINENT divine intervention with deadly consequences. God gives space to repent but there comes a point when He moves swiftly and harshly. Jesus, in effect, says: “**Deal with it – or I will**”.

Jesus says He is coming to FIGHT against this compromise in the church. If Jesus shows up for a fight – who do you suppose is going to win? He is bringing a sharp two-edged sword to the fight, and they have nothing! This would be a special visit of judgment that would result in a purging.

Slide # 14

1 Corinthians 3:17 (NKJV)

17 If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.

The sword of Christ's mouth is thought to be the Word of God. Swift judgment would be carried out in accordance with His Word.

We do not know for sure what happened, but there must have been dramatic action because today we don't even know much of anything about the Nicolaitans. They were either put out of the church or put down so quickly that history did not get a chance to have an ongoing record of their perversions.

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.” ’

This message is for all the churches! All should listen and make application as is appropriate. Then Christ gave an exhortation, a word of encouragement, an incentive to overcomers. Overcomers is the term that is consistently used by John to denote true believers who have a true, life-changing and enduring faith. Overcomers are those who prove to be true believers by persevering in the faith.

Slide # 15

1 John 5:4 (NKJV)

4 For whatever is **born of God** overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—**our faith**.

Here Christ promises overcomers three interrelated things. First, he says He will give overcomes some of the hidden manna to eat.

Manna in Hebrew literally means “What is it?” It was the bread from heaven that God supernaturally fed the Children of Israel with for 40 years in the wilderness (cf. Ex. 16:32-36; Heb. 9:4). It ultimately portrayed the bread of life from heaven, which is found in Christ (Jn. 6:27). Dining and fellowship go together in the Bible. In Rev. 3:20, Christ says to those who invite Him in that He will dine with them (cf. Jn. 4:32-34).

This promise to overcomers looks **forward** to the reward Christ will give once the journey is completed by faithful pilgrims. They will enter into blissful fellowship and be completely satisfied in feasting on Christ’s provision. They will eat at His table in the kingdom and share in delectable delights that are currently HIDDEN.

To those at Pergamos who refused the banquets of the pagan gods, Christ will give the manna of His great banquet of eternal life in the kingdom (John 6:47-58). - ***Expositors***

Second, Christ promises to give the overcomer a white stone. There are lots of ideas about what this signifies, and details are not given, so we don’t want to be dogmatic.

In those days at Pergamos, a white stone would be used as a ticket or a pass to certain events. Some, therefore, think this signifies a pass or ticket to the kingdom banquet at the marriage supper of the Lamb. It will be the greatest celebration of all time, but you have to have a ticket to get in.

Your relationship with Jesus is your ticket, signified in this white stone He will give to overcomers. White is the color of purity or holiness. This signifies one as being a holy overcomer.

Third, on this stone, a new name will be written which no one knows except for the person receiving it. Again, we are not given much information but evidently, this will be a very special name that Christ will know this person by in eternity. It evidently will be a name that defines this person's special relationship with Christ (cf. Rev. 3:12; 22:4; also Isa. 62:2; 65:15).

Like Abraham and Israel, the Lord Jesus will give each overcomer a new name appropriate to his own character and service.

– **Henry M. Morris**

It is like a fingerprint – no two are alike. All of us have our own individual relationship with Christ and that will evidently be reflected in this new name. It will be special, written on the special gift of the white stone and all overcomers will receive one in keeping with sharing in the hidden manna.

“I had been in the pastorate for barely a month when I was asked to perform a wedding for a girl in our church who was planning to marry an unbeliever. In a meeting of the church board, some of the leaders urged me to do the wedding because the girl’s father was an influential man. A lot was at stake, they said. We might lose this family from the church if I declined. I said, “But I can’t do that. I can’t do what Scripture clearly forbids. ... They replied, “Well, OK. We understand your feelings. We know a minister from somewhere else who will come in and do it, so that this girl can be married in the church. I asked them, “But whose church is this? Is this your church to be used at your discretion, or is this Christ’s church? They replied to their great credit, “Your right; we can’t do it. This is Christ’s church.” ... **That was the moment** when the future of our congregation was decided. Yes, an entire family left, and several other people withdrew their membership.... But we decided as elders that day we would not only preach the Word of God; we would expect it to be lived out in the corporate life of the church.”- **John MacArthur**

Indeed, that is the kind of REPENTANCE that Christ demanded of the church at Pergamos and the type of commitment He requires of the church today!

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches!