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Sermon Notes

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## **Pergamum: Standing for Truth Before Satan's Throne**

### **Revelation 2:12-17**

The invisible empire of Satan will become more and more clear the further we get in this amazing Book of Revelation

In Revelation 12, he will be depicted as a dragon, that ancient serpent, the devil, Satan, who leads the whole world astray

In that chapter, we will learn that Satan tried to take over heaven in an insurrection with angels, and he was defeated and thrown to the earth

In other places he is called the "god of this age" and we are told the whole world lies in the power of the evil one

In Isaiah 14, he is the puppet-master behind the King of Babylon, the most powerful empire ever seen up to that time... the hidden puppet-master who makes the human rulers who do not fear God to dance like marionettes on the end of the strings he controls

In Revelation 13, he will be the invisible power behind the throne of the Antichrist, the world ruler

As we come to the church at Pergamum, we learn something else... Satan has specific areas of power... places where his throne is located, where he has special influence

All of Satan's influence tends toward sin and rebellion... worldliness:

THE WORLD = Satan's masterpiece of evil

***1 John 2:15-17 Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. <sup>16</sup> For***

*everything in the world-- the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does-- comes not from the Father but from the world. <sup>17</sup> The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.*

Satan had a throne of power in Pergamum, and it was effectively leading many of the people of that church into sin.

This church is a timeless warning to the church in America... a church that is surrounded by constant temptations to worldliness, resulting in a grave spiritual danger

It is a top priority for us to hear what the Spirit says to this particular church.

## I. Christ's Sword vs. Satan's Throne

### A. Christ's Sharp, Double-Edged Sword

1. Christ describes himself based on the vision of Revelation 1

***Revelation 2:12 These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword.***

2. Here... he focuses on the sharp, double-edged sword that comes out of his mouth
3. This can be nothing less than the power of Christ's eternal word

***Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.***

- a. The double-edged sword has to do with Christ's work on SIN
- b. One edge slaughters unrepentant sinners
- c. One edge cuts out the tumor of sin from the hearts of his people
4. So this comes with a sense of threat... at the end of the letter, he threatens to use this sword against the sinners in this congregation:

***Revelation 2:16 Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.***

5. At the end of the book, he speaks of the exercise of the wrath

***Revelation 19:15 Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty.***

***Revelation 19:21 The rest of them were killed with the sword that came out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.***

6.

B. Satan's Throne: Localized Evil

1. As we've said, Satan has a worldwide empire, with sub-rulers

***2 Corinthians 4:4 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.***

***1 John 5:19 the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.***

***Ephesians 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.***

2. But here, Jesus implies that there are certain centers of evil

***Revelation 2:13 I know where you live-- where Satan has his throne.***

3. This could refer to an especially high level of influence toward paganism and toward worldliness

4. Colossians 1 speaks of THRONES... which connects with the word "rulers" in Ephesians 6

***Colossians 1:16 For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.***

5. The Book of Daniel implies territorially focused demonic powers when it speaks of the King of Persia that resisted the messenger angel for twenty-one days; that chapter also speaks of the King of Greece as well

6. In his temptation of Jesus, Satan claims rulership over all the earth

***Luke 4: All the kingdoms of the world have been given to me, and I can give them to whoever I want.***

7. So, Satan and his demons can set up thrones of power in specific areas... an evil base of operation... “Where Satan has his throne”

8. Personal testimony

a. I have felt a spiritual presence of evil, a demonic presence, far more in some places than in others

b. Probably the most powerful was an abortion clinic in Brookline, MA, where thousands of babies were killed every year, where we used to go to persuade women to keep their babies, where we also battled with pro-abortion radicals who yelled and screamed at us and threatened us

c. Also felt the demonic presence during an outdoor preaching event I did in Pune, India, during a Hindu festival called Diwali... the demonic power I felt was hanging like a cloud over the whole field like a blue smoke they spread to kill mosquitos with dengue fever

d. Sometimes Satan shows his evil power more vigorously in some places than in others

### C. The Setting: Pergamum

1. Location, details

a. Pergamum was about 100 miles north of Ephesus, with Smyrna located halfway between them

b. Unlike Ephesus and Smyrna, Pergamum was not a port city, but was located 15 miles inland from the Aegean Sea

- c. YET it was probably the greatest city in the region; Roman writer Pliny called Pergamum “by far the most distinguished city in Asia”
  - d. By the time John wrote Revelation, Pergamum had been the capitol city of the province of Asia for almost 250 years
  - e. Its present name in Turkey is Bergama
  - f. It was built on a large conical hill that towered one thousand feet above the surrounding plains
  - g. It had a massive library of over 200,000 volumes, of course all of those scrolls were handwritten (the printing press did not exist)
  - h. So it was a center of learning, rivalling Alexandria in Egypt for the foremost in that region of the world
  - i. As a matter of fact, the ruler of Egypt, jealous of Pergamum’s challenge to Alexandria, stopped all the export of Egyptian papyrus, the paper formed from reeds in Egypt... so the residents of Pergamum out of necessity developed parchment—paper formed from thin animal skins stretched out and dried... it was because of Pergamum that parchment became widely used throughout the ancient world, and the word itself—parchment—may derive from the word Pergamum
2. A strong center of paganism
- a. Because of its library, Pergamum was a powerful center of culture, including the polytheistic religion of the Greeks
  - b. Near the summit of the acropolis, that massive hill overlooking the whole region, stood an immense altar to Zeus, on which was a frieze depicting the heroic victory of the Pergamenes over the barbarian Gauls who invaded in 189 B.C. and fought the Romans... the people of Pergamum allied themselves with Rome and defeated the Gauls
  - c. This shows the fierce loyalty the people of Pergamum felt to Rome and to Greek culture

- d. Near the altar to Zeus was a significant shrine to the goddess of wisdom, Athena
  - e. Pergamum was thus a major center of pagan worship
3. Asclepius... the snake god of healing... was also honored there... and sick people from all over Asia made religious pilgrimages to Pergamum to be healed by the god of healing
  4. The imperial cult was also very powerful there... the loyalty of the citizens to Rome and to the emperor was established clearly in 29 BC... permission had been granted to the citizens of Pergamum to build and dedicate a temple to Augustus... this was the first temple built in honor of a living emperor... the people of Pergamum were thus worshiping the Roman Emperor as a god... that civil religion had its CENTER at Pergamum

So... the battle lines for TRUTH are drawn in Pergamum, where Satan has his throne... it will be the lies of the devil verses Christ who is the truth

## II. Standing for Truth When Satan Attacks Externally

### A. Battle Lines Drawn Clearly... Where Satan Has His Throne

On trial before Pontius Pilate, Jesus said

***“For this reason I was born and for this entered the world... to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.”***

***Pilate answered “What is truth?”***

Here is the answer:

***John 14:6 “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”***

But Satan seeks to kill souls with his lies:

***John 8:44 Satan is a liar and the father of lies... and a murderer, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him.***

In Pergamum, the battles lines between truth and error were drawn

## B. Christ's Self-Description Points to the Truth

***Revelation 2:12 "These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword."***

Christ fights powerfully against Satan's lies by the inerrant Word of God, the Word which has poured from His mouth for centuries through the prophets and the apostles

He fights the false doctrines of Satan by his witnesses, who stand for the truth with the word of God in their mouths:

***Revelation 14:5 "No lie was found in their mouths; they are blameless."***

## C. Christ Commends the Church for their Stand for Truth

***Revelation 2:13 "I know where you live, where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city—where Satan lives."***

1. The commendation is powerful: you STOOD FOR THE TRUTH of my name
2. You did not renounce your faith in me
3. Who was ANTIPAS??
  - a. Jesus calls him "my faithful witness"
  - b. We know nothing else about him, but we can well imagine the circumstance of his martyrdom in a place like Pergamum
  - c. He was arrested for failing to worship the Emperor... to sacrifice on the fire burning in the temple of Caesar, to burn the pinch of incense
  - d. He had to say the words "Caesar is Lord" and throw a pinch of incense onto the fire
  - e. He WOULD NOT DO it!

- f. He was baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and his central confession was “Jesus is Lord”

***Romans 10:9,10, 13 “If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” For it is with the heart that you believe and are justified, and with the mouth that you confess and are saved... For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”***

- g. Antipas had made that confession with his mouth... JESUS IS LORD... Lord of heaven and earth... Lord of my life... Lord of the living and the dead
- h. He had made that confession with his mouth because he believed it in his heart
- i. Now, under threat of death, Antipas had to SEVER the connection between his mouth and his heart... “Say, ‘Caesar is Lord,’ burn the incense... but in your HEART, you know the truth—Jesus is Lord.”
- j. Antipas WOULD NOT DO IT! Jesus called him “My faithful witness!”

***Acts 1:8 “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses.”***

- k. Jesus put Antipas on a pedestal, on display... so the pagans of Pergamum could know the truth of Christ... Caesar is not Lord, Jesus is Lord
- l. And they put him to death in that city, where Satan has his throne
4. His death put the pressure on the entire church in Pergamum... they knew Antipas personally, and fear could have gripped them as a church... they could have caved in and renounced their faith in Christ because they knew the penalty was death to refuse Caesar
5. The pressure of Satan’s lies was powerful, the church members were threatened with suffering and death, and yet they chose to stand for the truth



6. The TRUTH of Christ was what gave them the power to stand firm in the day of testing
7. BUT... there were still serious problems with this church
8. There was a corruption in the doctrine of the church that threatened their very survival
9. It is not enough to BEGIN the race; we have to PERSEVERE to the end

***Matthew 24:13 “He who stands firm TO THE END will be saved.”***

10. If this tumor in the heart of the church is not cut out, the church will fall to the lies of Satan
11. The tumor: FALSE DOCTRINE LEADING TO WORLDLINESS

### III. Standing for Holiness When Satan Attacks Internally

#### A. True Christianity: Right Doctrine Must Result in Holy Living

1. There cannot be a severing between what we say we believe about Christ and how we live our physical lives in this world
2. Satan is going to try to pull the church toward worldliness... the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, the boastful pride of life
3. Personal holiness is the greatest single mark of genuine Christianity

***1 John 1:5-6 This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light, and in him, there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with Christ and yet walk in darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.***

***Galatians 6:7 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his flesh, from his flesh will reap destruction.***

***1 Corinthians 6:9-10 Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the Kingdom of God. Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor male prostitutes, nor homosexual offenders, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor***

***slanderers, nor swindlers will inherit the Kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of the Lord.”***

In other words, when Christ truly saves someone, he saves them OUT of sin and wickedness into a genuinely holy life... fighting sin

4. Even worse is when false teachers stand up and teach false doctrine about the life in the body... they are called LIBERTINES in some places, but here in Pergamum, they were called NICOLAITANS... mystically connected to Balaam of the Old Testament

#### B. Christ’s Criticism of Pergamum

***Revelation 2:14-15 Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: You have people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality. <sup>15</sup> Likewise you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans.***

1. Christ “holds a few things against” the church at Pergamum... they are tolerating and perhaps even delighting in the false teaching of the “Balaamites” and “Nicolaitans”
2. The majority of the church were faithful to Christ... but an influential minority were being led astray into sexual immorality and the eating of meat sacrificed to idols at the pagan temples... the old, sensual lifestyle of sensual indulgence connected with pagan religion... the sexual immorality of temple prostitutes, the orgies and the indulgent feasts done in the name of pleasure and false gods and goddesses
3. Probably two different heresies, but closely related to each other
4. The “teaching of Balaam”
  - a. Balaam was a notorious Old Testament prophet we meet in Numbers 22-25

- b. He was a mystical seer who had some ability to predict the future, perhaps in some way the living God had used him as a mouthpiece before we meet him in the Numbers account
- c. He was a prophet for hire... in it for the money
- d. He was hired by Balak, King of Moab, after Balak had heard what Israel had done in destroying the Amorites
- e. Balak went to Balaam to hire him to utter a prophetic curse on Israel
- f. Balaam was severely warned by Almighty God not to speak any words of curse but only words of blessing concerning Israel
- g. The final warning came when his own donkey spoke to him when the donkey saw the terrifying angel of the Lord with his sword drawn ready to kill Balaam if he disobeyed
- h. So in all, three times Balaam refused to curse Israel, but actually spoke lavish words of prophetic blessing on Israel
- i. This enraged Balak, king of the Moabites...
- j. But apparently Balaam offered another way to destroy Israel... though his involvement in this was not made plain in the Old Testament text
- k. Jesus tells us what happened at that time:

***Revelation 2:14 Balaam... taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality.***

- l. Balaam plotted to use Moabite women to lure the Israelites into the wickedness of the godless nations of Canaan... sexual immorality and idolatry
- m. This was the terrible Baal of Peor... Balaam's plan succeeded and God in his holiness intervened and severely punished Israel for their sin: 24,000 men died; Israel was thus checked from an overt slide into evil

- n. Now in Pergamum, it seems there were false teachers who were having the same effect on the church that Balaam and the Moabite women had on the nation of Israel... alluring church members into the same types of ritual sex and idolatry in the same pattern of all the pagans of Pergamum
- o. Peter speaks of the same false teachers:

***2 Peter 2:13-19 Their idea of pleasure is to carouse in broad daylight. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their pleasures while they feast with you. <sup>14</sup> With eyes full of adultery, they never stop sinning; they seduce the unstable; they are experts in greed-- an accursed brood! <sup>15</sup> They have left the straight way and wandered off to follow the way of Balaam son of Beor, who loved the wages of wickedness. <sup>16</sup> But he was rebuked for his wrongdoing by a donkey-- a beast without speech-- who spoke with a man's voice and restrained the prophet's madness. <sup>17</sup> ¶ These men are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. Blackest darkness is reserved for them. <sup>18</sup> For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error. <sup>19</sup> They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity-- for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him.***

- p. This alliance with worldly religion and sexual immorality could never be tolerated... there are so many warnings about this in the New Testament

***James 4:4-5 You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. <sup>5</sup> Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely?***

***2 Corinthians 6:14-18 Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? <sup>15</sup> What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? <sup>16</sup> What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be***

***their God, and they will be my people." <sup>17</sup> "Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you." <sup>18</sup> "I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."***

#### 5. Nicolaitans

- a. Quite possibly the Nicolaitans are the very people Jesus was addressing in verse 15...
- b. He begins in verse 16 by saying "Likewise" or "In the same way" or "Thus"... that either means the Nicolaitas were the moderns Balaamites, or merely similar to them
- c. It doesn't really matter... Satan has a limited number of goals, but he uses a variety of ways to achieve them... he is trying to drag Christian into the **WORLDLINESS** of the "lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life"... and the Nicolaitans seem plainly the kind of false teachers who were dragging people into fleshly indulgence and false religion
- d. The Nicolaitans taught **LICENSE**... that it doesn't matter what you do with your body as long as Jesus has your heart...
- e. But this is the essence of the world's attack... this is the very thing that Christ's faithful witness Antipas refused to do: have a separation between belief of the soul and actions of the body
- f. Again, the majority of the members of the church of Pergamum **DID NOT** hold to these false teachings... but they were responsible to **EXPEL** the wicked members from among them, as Paul made plain in 1 Cor. 5:

#### C. The Church's Responsibility to Purity Itself

1. It is not acceptable to tolerate this kind of false teaching and false living by people who call themselves Christians
2. This is the whole point of 1 Cor. 5

***1 Corinthians 5:4-6 When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, <sup>5</sup> hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature***

*may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord. <sup>6</sup> ¶  
Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast works  
through the whole batch of dough?*

*1 Corinthians 5:9-13 I have written you in my letter not to associate with  
sexually immoral people-- <sup>10</sup> not at all meaning the people of this  
world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In  
that case you would have to leave this world. <sup>11</sup> But now I am  
writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls  
himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a  
slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even  
eat. <sup>12</sup> What business is it of mine to judge those outside the  
church? Are you not to judge those inside? <sup>13</sup> God will judge those  
outside. "Expel the wicked man from among you."*

3. God knows that this wickedness has the power to spread like yeast  
though a batch of dough, or like a plague through a medieval city
4. The wicked MUST be expelled in the name of the Lord
5. America and American churches CELEBRATE TOLERANCE...  
but we're going to see several times in these letters to the Seven  
Churches that toleration of sin is a great evil in the sight of Christ

#### IV. The Warning: Repent or Die

##### A. The Clear Command from Christ

*Revelation 2:16 Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and  
will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.*

##### B. Repent

1. The Balaamites and Nicolaitans themselves must repent  
immediately
2. There is always the way of genuine repentance open if God should  
grant it

3. To repent means to THINK DIFFERENTLY, and to make a U-Turn... to live an entirely new way of life... a change of mind resulting in a change of life
4. To “bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance” as John the Baptist put it... to stop going to the temples and eating the meat and committing sexual immorality

### C. Christ’s Open Threat: Death to the Wicked

1. Christ threatens to fight against them with the sword of his mouth
2. This is the same sword he will use to strike down the wicked followers of the Beast at the Second Coming in Revelation 19; with that sword he will win the final battle
3. It is clearly the power of death coming from his mouth... Jesus created the universe with the breath of his mouth; he sustains the universe by the word of his power; and he has the power to kill also by the breath of his mouth
4. All he need do is say “Be dead!!” to his enemies, and they will fall dead instantly

North Carolina state government has a public service campaign to warn people of the dangers of playing with moving trains... either trying to drive in front of an onrushing train, or trying to jump out of the way of a train at the last minute... the essence of the campaign’s message is that a battle between a speeding train and a human or even a pickup truck is STRICTLY NO CONTEST... an immeasurably unequal battle; momentum is calculated at  $\frac{1}{2}$  mass x velocity squared... an average diesel train engine weighs 150 tons; an average total train is over 4000 tons; but a pickup truck is only 4 tons. Outweighed by 1000 to 1. And that’s a good sized pickup truck. A human being weighs essentially nothing compared to the train.

Well, the battle between Christ and any created being, including Satan, is even more unequal. If Jesus fights against you with the sword of his mouth, you die. It’s that’s simple.

So it was with Ananias and Sapphira: they lied to God about the money they donated to the church... and each of them fell down dead in an instant.

5. The heretics and their followers are directly threatened, but the warning is spoken to the entire church... the contagion of sin is so dangerous that anyone who deals with it is in grave danger...

***Galatians 6:1 Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.***

#### D. Jesus Cannot Tolerate Any Evil Whatsoever!

1. The whole witness of the church is threatened by sin
2. If the church is enticed to evil it will become worldly and corrupt, and can no longer be Christ's representatives in Pergamum
3. He would rather fight against them with the sword of his mouth than to allow them to bear his name as sexually immoral idolaters

#### V. The Reward: Hidden Manna, a Secret Stone

##### A. Christ's Call to Listen

***Revelation 2:17 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.***

1. Faith comes by hearing
2. Faith is also sustained by hearing
3. And what is faith? The eyesight of the soul
4. And what do we see in the invisible, spiritual realm? The holiness of God and the wickedness of sin... and not just in general, but the evil of the sin IN US

***Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.***



- a. The word “conviction” means to see the specific sins in our hearts and lives and see them as the evil they really are
  - b. To see those sins in light of the holiness of Christ, and in light of the terror of Judgment Day
5. Listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches... we have the same dangers facing us in our day as the church at Pergamum faced in theirs
  6. Only by faith will we take these words seriously

#### B. Christ’s Promise to the Overcomers

1. “To him who overcomes...”; “To him who CONQUERS...”
2. We are called on to WAGE WAR... to fight with SIN, or else Christ will fight with US
3. This is the essence of the holiness Christ is calling us to... to put sin to death, to conquer Satan’s alluring world system, with its sensual pleasures, its constant pull toward sexual immorality

***Romans 8:13-14 For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live,<sup>14</sup> because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.***

4. The Spirit leads us into battle with the flesh and its lusts; we MUST overcome, we MUST wage war and win
5. And if we conquer sin, listen to Christ’s promises:

***Revelation 2:17 To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it.***

- a. The “hidden manna” hearkens back to the days of the Israelites as they travelled through the wilderness, and God provided food for them day after day
  - i) The “hidden” nature of it goes to the spiritual fulfillment of the manna, and that is CHRIST himself... Jesus Christ is the “bread of heaven” that sustains our souls

***John 6:35 Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.***

- ii) The people sucked into the pagan lifestyle, drawn by the sensual temptations of the temple, with its meat sacrificed to idols and its illicit sex, they were dominated by a LUST-FILLED HUNGER that actually only grew and grew... the more they satisfied their lusts, the hungrier and thirstier they got for more
  - iii) But Jesus promises here to be the HIDDEN MANNA, the inner feast that totally satisfies our souls, that means we will never hunger and thirst again
  - iv) The hidden manna signifies a deeper, richer, more satisfying experience of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit
  - v) And this EARTHLY experience of Christ is merely a foretaste of the true feast that awaits us in heaven!!
  - vi) All the best promises of Christ to these seven churches are HEAVENLY, not earthly... so also here; if you run the race of holiness and conquer your inner lusts, you will inherit a heavenly life of infinitely greater pleasures than anything this world can give you
- b. The “white stone” with a “new name” written on it that is known secretly only by the person who receives it... WHAT IS THAT?
- i) Not really sure...
  - ii) Some of the best commentators link it to the priestly Urim and Thummim by which Old Testament priests determined the will of God; one was white and the other black; and the priest would ask a “Yes” or “No” question, and would cast out one of the stones, and white was for YES... so perhaps this is the knowledge of God’s will, and that all the promises of God in Christ are YES and AMEN

- iii) Others link it to a diamond, the most precious of all the stones, on which would be written the secret name of God
  - iv) Perhaps all of this points to a NEW IDENTITY that Christ will give us as priests in his name, that we will be his priests on earth and in the New Universe that is coming
  - v) In any case, the NEW NAME may well refer to our changed nature and a deeper relationship with Christ in which Christ calls us to a whole new status with him by conquering our lusts and sins
- c. In total... the hidden manna and the white stone and the new name all point to an eternity of deeply, richly, satisfying relationship with Christ forever in heaven... vastly greater pleasure and joy than anything that sex and food can do on earth

C. The Church is Called on to Witness to and Suffer and Fight for the Truth, and to Conquer Worldliness

***1 Timothy 3:15 God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.***

## VI. Applications

A. Come to Christ, Lest He Fight You with His Terrible Sword

To the Church:

B. Recognize the Terrible Danger of Worldliness

1. The same lusts are assaulting our souls today

***1 John 2:15-17 Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. <sup>16</sup> For everything in the world-- the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does-- comes not from the Father but from the world. <sup>17</sup> The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.***

2. We have our own temples, our own alluring prostitutes whose images on the internet are corrupting God's servants today

3. God has given us this timeless call to fight the world's lusts and to overcome:

***James 4:4-5 You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. <sup>5</sup> Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely?***

4. But suppose you have been drawn into this sin
- a. Suppose you are addicted to internet pornography?
  - b. Suppose you have been compromising with worldliness in other ways... allured by the materialism and sensual pleasures of the American lifestyle
  - c. If you have been polluted, first, see the DANGER of Christ's double-edged sword... realize that Christ holds the power of life and death over you
  - d. He is patient, he is loving, but he is perfectly holy as well
  - e. As we will see in the next letter, to Thyatira, he gives us time to repent
5. Listen to the remedy

***James 4:6-10 But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." <sup>7</sup> Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. <sup>8</sup> Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. <sup>9</sup> Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. <sup>10</sup> Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.***

- a. Rely on God's grace... it is not an Old Covenant LAW in which you are on your own and have to conquer sin by yourself
- b. Rely on Christ, his blood to cleanse your past sins; his resurrection to be your new life; his Spirit living in you

- c. Humble yourself... pray most earnestly to him... be honest in your confession of sin... tell him what you've done
- d. God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble
- e. So... humble yourselves most deeply
- f. Submit yourselves fully to God... see yourself as his child, he your loving and infinitely powerful Father
- g. Resist the devil... fight against him by the power of the Word and the Spirit... set him to FLEE from you; actually, he is fleeing from the power of God in you
- h. Draw near to God and he will draw near to you; pray, worship, immerse yourself in scripture
- i. Wash your hands as a filthy sinner, purify your hearts as a double-minded, worldly person... realize the disease has gotten deep within you; it is no light matter
- j. Change your behavior patterns; if your right hand is causing you to sin, cut it off and throw it away;
- k. Grieve, mourn, wail... change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom... be DEEPLY SORROWFUL over your sins
- l. Humble yourselves patiently under God, wait on him, let him lift you up

All of that is PERSONAL... but we need to care about the CHURCH AS A WHOLE

### C. Be Active in Each Other's Lives

1. "Watch over one another in brotherly love"
2. Be willing to ask accountability questions
3. Commit to pray for each other and teach and admonish each other with all wisdom