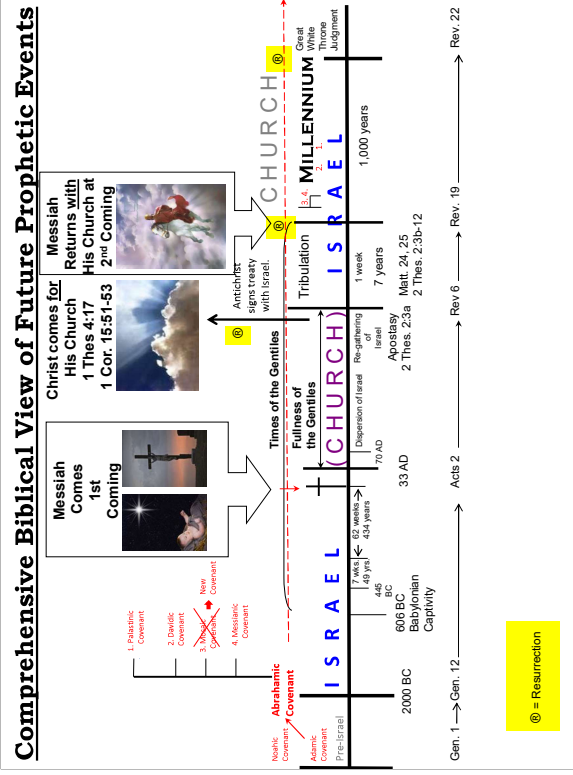


The Church at Pergamum

“Holding To God and Holding To Satan ”

Rev. 2:12-17

Nov. 13, 2016



Rev 2:12-17

12 "And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write:

The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this:

13 'I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

14 'But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality.

15 'So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

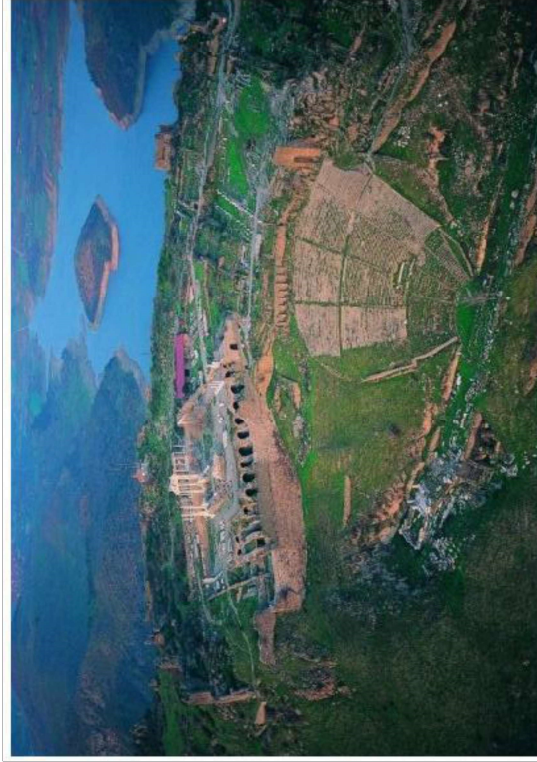
16 'Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth.

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 some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.'

City of Pergamum

- Founded in the 3rd century BC.
- 20 miles inland from the Aegean Sea.
- Population was 200,000 +.
- Capital of Asia before Ephesus.
- One of the most influential cities in the Roman Empire.
- Pergamum had a unique status that was different than any other city because it was the political center. It was from there that all the rulings were made that affected all of Asia Minor.
- Library of 200,000 volumes, 2nd only to the Library of Alexandria, the largest in Asia. Roman general Marc Antony presented it as a wedding gift to Cleopatra.
- Invented parchment made out of calfskin. Parchment lasts much better than papyrus, so this invention played a big part in preserving the Bible for us.

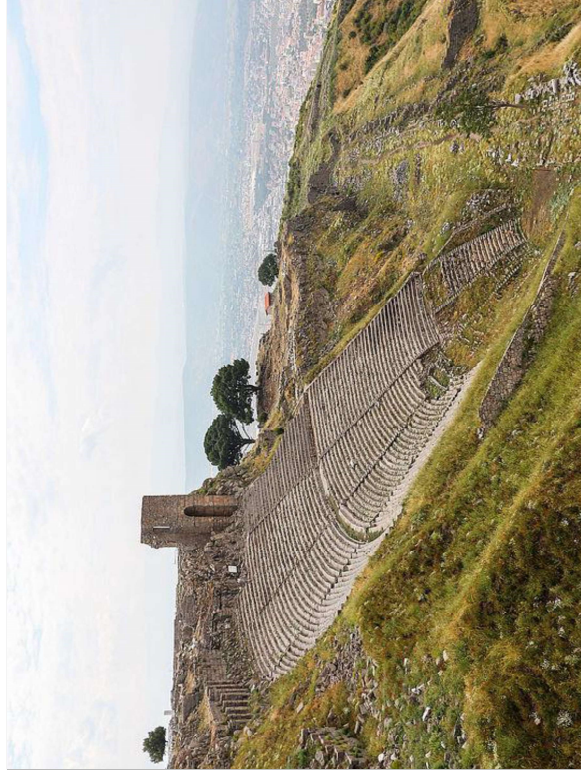
- Pergamum was also a well-known center for the arts. The city's theater seated ten thousand people a night. The acoustics were so good that a whisper on stage could be heard all the way in the top row.
- Had temples to dedicated to the deities of Zeus, Athena, Dionysius, and Asklepios.
- Even greater than the worship of all those deities was Pergamum's devotion to the cult of emperor worship. Pergamum built the first temple devoted to emperor worship in Asia (29 B.C.), in honor of Emperor Augustus. Later, the city would build two more such temples, honoring the emperors Trajan and Septimus Severus. The city thus became the center of emperor worship in the province, and there, more than in any other city in Asia, Christians were in danger of harm from the emperor worship cult. Elsewhere, Christians were primarily in danger on the one day per year they were required to offer sacrifices to the emperor; in Pergamum they were in danger every day.

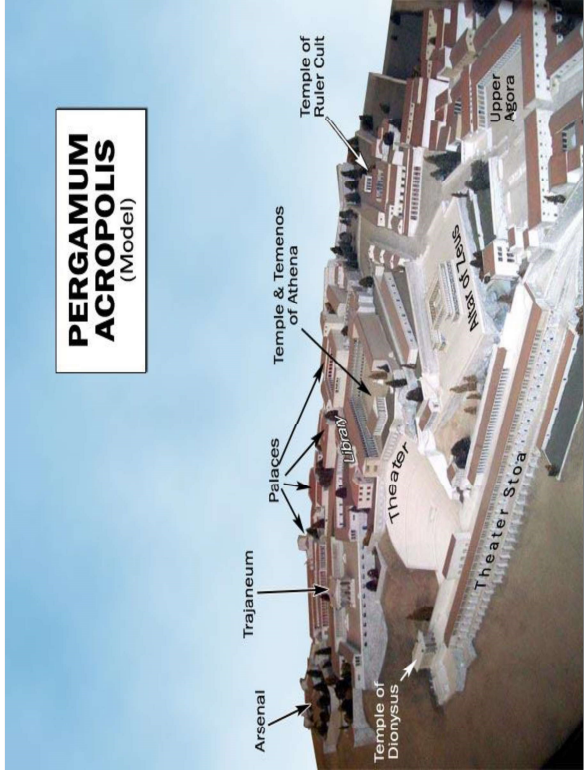
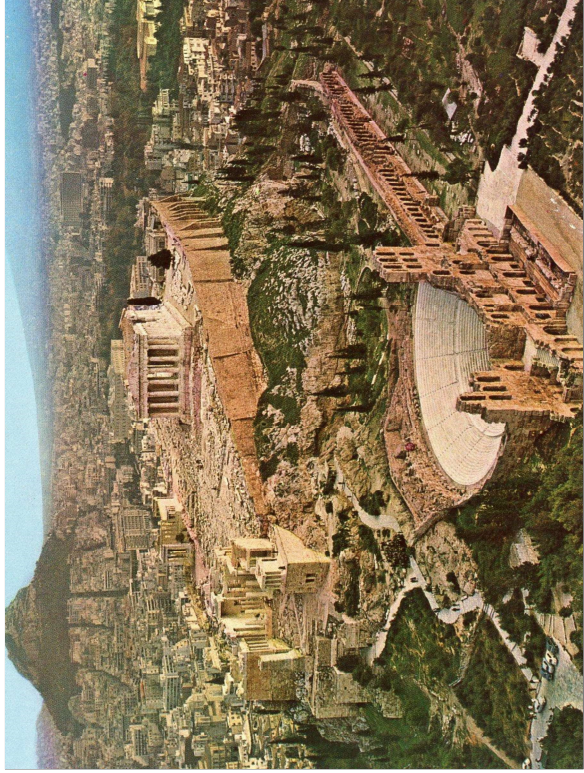
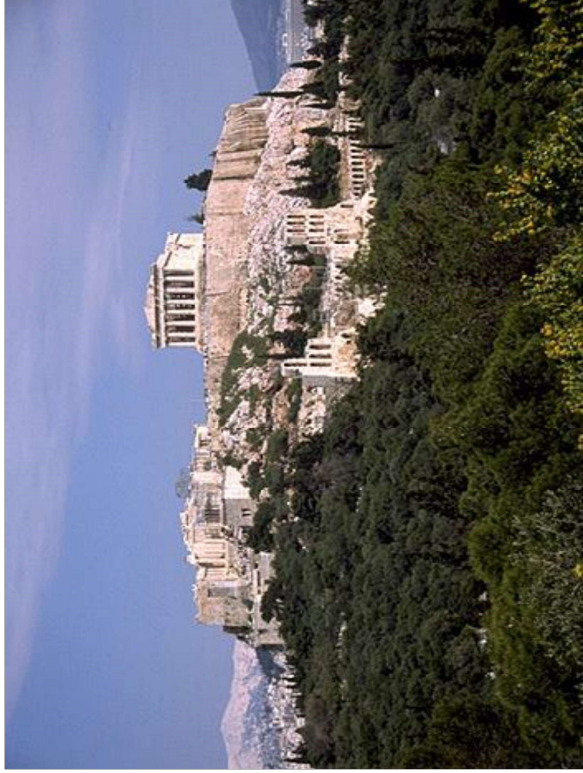
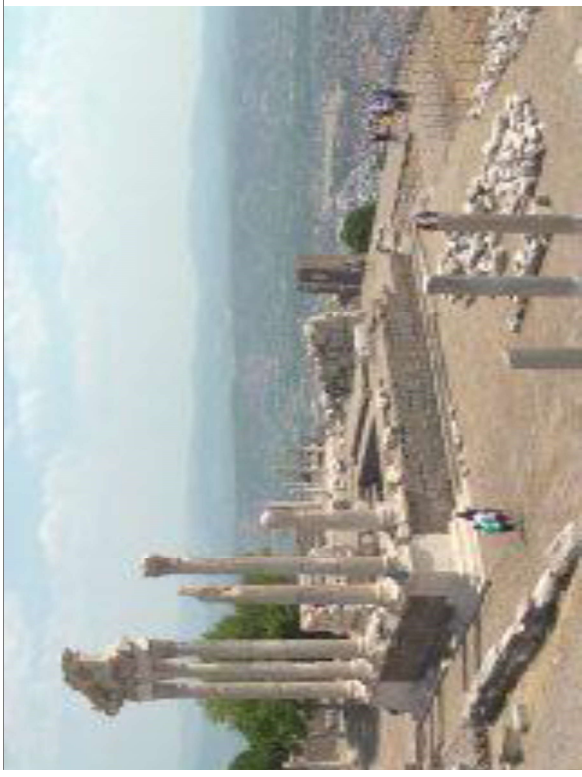


Aerial View of Ancient Pergamum

Asklepios

- god of healing, medicine. Made famous the snake around a pole.
- The healing center was called the Asklepleion, built in honor of Asklepios, the Greek serpent-god. This was a cross between a hospital and a health spa, where patients could get everything from a mud bath to a major surgery. Even the emperors came all the way from Rome to be treated here, but this was no ordinary doctor's visit.
- "if you were a terminal patient, you were not allowed to go into the Asklepleion," These Asklepleion priests didn't want anyone hearing that someone had died in the Asklepleion. There was a huge sign just above the official entrance to the Asklepleion that said, "Death is not permitted here." So the only way you were going to get in to begin with is if they knew you were going to live. Patients entered through an underground tunnel. Then they drank a sedative, and spent the night in the dormitories of the Asklepleion, while non-poisonous snakes crawled around them all night. They were told that the serpent-god Asklepios would speak to them in their dreams and give them a diagnosis. It was believed that the snakes carried the healing power of Asklepios," and if a snake slithered across you while you were sleeping at night, that was a divine sign that healing power was coming to you. The next morning, the patients told their "dreams" to the priests, who prescribed their treatments. Finally, the patients made clay sculptures of the body parts that needed healing and offered them to Asklepios.
- Rick Renner
Historian
- During the reign of Emperor Diocletian, some Christian stonecutters were executed for refusing to carve an image of Asklepios.







Rev 2:12-17

12 "And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write:

The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this:

13 'I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

14 'But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality.

15 'So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

16 'Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth.

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 some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.'

Rev 1:16

16 In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword;

Heb 4:12

2 For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Why is Satan's throne in Pergamum?

"The word 'throne' was used in a personal private residence, and it was a chair for the lord of the house, the master of the house. The very fact that Jesus would use this word means that Satan felt at home there. He sat on a throne there. It was his territory. He was the master of that house." -Renner

1. Strict emperor worship.
2. Temple of Zeus.
3. Center of religion – several temples, mystery religions from Babylon.

Rev 2:12-17

12 "And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write:

The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this:

13 'I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

14 'But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality.

15 'So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

16 'Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth.

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 some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.'

Rev 2:12-17

12 "And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write:

The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this:

13 'I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

14 'But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality.

15 'So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

16 'Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth.

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 some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.'

The believers at Pergamum “held fast” His name –

1. His Deity.
2. His true humanity.
3. His saving power.
4. His grace and mercy.
5. His immutability.
6. His veracity.
7. His Eternality.
8. And all of the attributes that are unique to Christ.

Rev 2:12-17

12 "And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write:

The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this:

13 'I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

14 'But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality.

15 'So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

16 'Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth.

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 some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.'

Antipas

1. A leader (elder/pastor) at the church at Pergamum.

2. One who was faithful until death (martyr).

"He had cast out so many devils that the demons had been complaining to pagans, saying, 'You've got to do something about this Antipas!'" The pagan priests went to the Roman governor and complained that the prayers of Antipas were driving their spirits out of the city and hindering the worship of their gods. As punishment, the governor ordered Antipas to offer a sacrifice of wine and incense to a statue of the Roman emperor and declare that the emperor was "lord and god. Antipas refused.

If you reject the divinity of the emperor, then that is the equivalent of rejecting the city of Rome, and believers were killed for this. Antipas was sentenced to death on the Altar of Zeus. At the top of the altar was a hollow bronze bull, designed for human sacrifice. They would take the victim, place him inside the bull, and they would tie him in such a way that his head would go into the head of the bull. Then they would light a huge fire under the bull, and as the fire heated the bronze, the person inside of the bull would slowly begin to roast to death. As the victim would begin to moan and to cry out in pain, his cries would echo through the pipes in the head of the bull so it seemed to make the bull come alive. Even in the midst of the flames, Antipas died praying for his church. The year was AD 92." -Renner

- Antipas earned the “crown of life.”
- Christ uses Antipas to demonstrate an uncompromised life.

Rev 2:12-17

12 "And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write:

The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this:

13 'I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

14 'But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality.

15 'So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

16 'Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth.

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 some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.'

Balak and Balaam

Num. 22-25,31

Balak – King of Moab.

Balaam – False prophet.

Fearful of Israel as they came close to his boarders, and knowing what they had done to the Amorites, Balak summoned Balaam to put a curse on Israel so he could defeat Israel's army. Balaam tried but God turned his cursing into blessing for Israel. Balaam then suggested to Balak to entice the men of Israel into sexual immorality which Balak agreed to. This led to Israel falling into idolatry. God killed 24,000 of Israel to stop the immorality.

“stumbling block”

σκανδαλον [Skandalon] can be used to describe a trap, more specifically the trigger of the trap upon which the bait is laid.

The church at Pergamum therefore believed –

1. It was just fine to indulge in pagan practices – banquets, dinners, that paid honor to the pagan idols.
2. It was also fine engage in sexual immorality under the guise of religion.

Num. 22-25,31

Balak – King of Moab.

Balaam – False prophet.

Fearful of Israel as they came close to his boarders, and knowing what they had done to the Amorites, Balak summoned Balaam to put a curse on Israel so he could defeat Israel's army. Balaam tried but God turned his cursing into blessing for Israel. Balaam then suggested to Balak to entice the men of Israel into sexual immorality which Balak agreed to. This led to Israel falling into idolatry. God killed 24,000 of Israel to stop the immorality.

Satan's strategy: If he can't defeat believers externally with a curse/persecution/tribulation, he will seek to defeat them internally with corruption. He will come as either a "roaring lion" or an "angel of light."

The issue of whether Christians could participate in idolatrous feasts had been settled decades earlier at the Jerusalem Council, which issued a mandate for believers.

Acts 15:29

29 that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well.

James 4:4

4 You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

Balak and Balaam

2 Cor 6:14-18

14 Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?

15 Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?

16 Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said,

"I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM;

AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.

17 "Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE," says the Lord.

"AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN;

And I will welcome you.

18 "And I will be a father to you,

And you shall be sons and daughters to Me,"

Says the Lord Almighty.

NASU

Rev 2:12-17

12 "And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this:

13 'I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

14 'But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality.

15 'So you also have some **who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.**

16 'Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth.

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 some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.'

Nicolaitans

- Nothing mentioned in scripture or in history as to who these were other than here.
- Promoters of the worldly practices of dining with idols and sexual immorality with idol worship.
- Supporter of Gnosticism – the body and spirit are separate and what the body does has no effect on the spirit.
- Also Pergamum became the headquarters for the mystery religions of the Babylonians. So in Pergamum you had the great high priest of the Babylonian religion. The high priest of the Babylonian religion was called Pontifex Maximus. He and the priests under them became the leaders and directors of men. This went therefore from Babylon, through Pergamum, and ultimately to Rome, and now is used of the Pope.
- **Nicolaitans** – those who lord it over others.
- The problem was not that the Nicolaitans existed in the city but that they existed in the church.

Rev 2:12-17

12 "And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write:

The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this:

13 'I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

14 'But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality.

15 'So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

16 'Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth.

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 some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.'

Rev 2:12-17

- 12 "And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write:
The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this:
- 13 'I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.
- 14 'But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality.
- 15 'So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.
- 16 'Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth.
- 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 some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.'

"hidden manna"

Manna was a honey-flavored bread with which God fed the Israelites during their years of wandering in the wilderness (Ex 16:14 ff.). As a memorial (Ex 16:33), the Israelites were to keep a jar of manna inside the Ark of the Covenant during their travels. The hidden manna represents Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life who came down from heaven (John 6:48-51). He provides spiritual sustenance for those who put their faith in Him. The hidden manna symbolizes all the blessings and benefits of knowing Christ. Christ Himself is the "hidden manna", being no longer visible since His ascension.

Rev 2:12-17

- 12 "And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write:
The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this:
- 13 'I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.
- 14 'But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality.
- 15 'So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.
- 16 'Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth.
- 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 some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.'

"hidden manna"

Manna was a honey-flavored bread with which God fed the Israelites during their years of wandering in the wilderness (Ex 16:14 ff.). According to Ex 16:33, the Israelites were to memorialize that divine provision by keeping a jar of manna inside the Ark of the Covenant during their travels. The hidden manna represents Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life who came down from heaven (John 6:48-51). He provides spiritual sustenance for those who put their faith in Him. The hidden manna symbolizes all the blessings and benefits of knowing Christ. Christ Himself is the "hidden manna", being no longer visible since His ascension.

"white stone"

- In an ancient court of law, when defendants were condemned, they received a black stone with their name on it. If they were acquitted, they received a white stone.
- When athletes won, they were awarded a white stone with their name on it, which was a token of honor.

Rev 2:12-17

- 12 "And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write:
The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this:
- 13 'I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.
- 14 'But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality.
- 15 'So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.
- 16 'Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth.
- 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 some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.'

"hidden manna"

Manna was a honey-flavored bread with which God fed the Israelites during their years of wandering in the wilderness (Ex 16:14 ff.). According to Ex 16:33, the Israelites were to memorialize that divine provision by keeping a jar of manna inside the Ark of the Covenant during their travels. The hidden manna represents Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life who came down from heaven (John 6:48-51). He provides spiritual sustenance for those who put their faith in Him. The hidden manna symbolizes all the blessings and benefits of knowing Christ. Christ Himself is the "hidden manna", being no longer visible since His ascension.

"white stone"

- In an ancient court of law, when defendants were condemned, they received a black stone with their name on it. If they were acquitted, they received a white stone.
- When athletes won, they were awarded a white stone with their name on it, which was a token of honor.

"new name"

καίνοσ - kainos, - new in quality, use, application, or character
χρονος - chronos - being new in time.

*An intimate name given by Christ to the believer, known only by Christ. The Lord has promised that there will be this deep fellowship that is indicated by the new name on the white stone.



Samuel John Stone was a clergyman of the Church of England and served in several churches. The hymn **The Church's One Foundation** is a Christian hymn written in the 1860s by Samuel.

The song was written as a direct response to some teaching, considered unorthodox at the time, by John William Colenso, first Bishop of Natal, which created schism within the Church of South Africa. This topic is alluded to within the third verse of the text "Though with a scornful wonder men see her sore oppressed, by schisms rent asunder, by heresies distressed."

Samuel John Stone
1839-1900

Bishop Colenso was called out for his teachings, he appealed to the higher ecclesiastical authorities in England. It was then that Samuel Stone became involved in the debate. It inspired him to write a set of hymns in 1866, one of which was , **"The Church's One Foundation"** based on **1 Cor. 3:11** – "For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

THE CHURCH'S ONE FOUNDATION

- 1 The church's one foundation is Jesus Christ, her Lord;
she is his new creation by water and the Word.
From heaven he came and sought her to be his holy bride;
with his own blood he bought her, and for her life he died.
- 2 Elect from every nation, yet one o'er all the earth;
her charter of salvation: one Lord, one faith, one birth.
One holy name she blesses, partakes one holy food,
and to one hope she presses, with every grace endued.
- 3 Though with a scornful wonder the world see her oppressed,
by schisms rent asunder, by heresies distressed,
yet saints their watch are keeping; their cry goes up: "How long?"
and soon the night of weeping shall be the morn of song.
- 4 Mid toil and tribulation, and tumult of her war,
she waits the consummation of peace forevermore,
till with the vision glorious her longing eyes are blest,
and the great church victorious shall be the church at rest.
- 5 Yet she on earth hath union with God the Three in One,
and mystic sweet communion with those whose rest is won:
O happy ones and holy! Lord, give us grace that we
like them, the meek and lowly, may live eternally.