

Revelation 2:12-17

Introduction:

There is a striking parallel between the messages that Jesus gave to the seven churches and the parables that He gave in Matthew 13. We will look briefly at them.

1. The first parable in Matt. 13:18-23 is the parable of the **Sower**. The Word of God had been sown on good ground and brought forth fruit. The EPHESIAN period of church history brought forth much fruit, but they lost their first love.
2. The second parable is that of the Wheat and **Tares**. The Wheat (Christians) were infiltrated by the Tares (unsaved.) The SMYRNA period of church history brought forth an abundance of tares that tried to co-mingle with the wheat.
3. The third parable in Matt. 13 is the parable of the **Mustard** Seed. The mustard seed is nothing more than an herb and never should gain size or strength represented in the parable. The birds of the first parable are the same as the birds of this parable. During the PERGAMOS period of church history the church seemingly grew to such abnormal size due to the influx of unsaved people by the decree of Constantine.

III. The Church At Pergamos (2:12-17)

A. The Splendid City of Pergamos (2:12a)

1. The name “Pergamos” means “The gaining of elevation through **marriage**.”
2. Pergamos was the greatest religious capital with temples to several false gods and goddesses.
 - a. The temple of Minerva – The goddess of wisdom
 - b. The temple of **Apollo** – The god of sunlight, prophecy, music and poetry.
 - c. The temple of **Venus** – The goddess of reproduction, love and beauty.
 - d. The temple of Bacchus (Dionysus) – the god of wine.
 - e. The temple of Jupiter – the chief Roman god. (Note: In Acts 14:12, Barnabas is called Jupiter by the people of Lystra.)
 - f. The temple of Aesculapius – the god of medicine and healing. {Note: The snake entwined rod of Aesculapius is still the sign of the medical field today.}
3. Pergamos was built on a **mountain** and was virtually unconquerable.
4. Pergamos is located **20** miles inland from the Aegean Sea, **60** miles north of Smyrna.

5. Pliny labeled Pergamos as “the most illustrious of Asia.”
 6. Pergamos was home to one of the greatest libraries in the ancient world, boasting over 200,000 handwritten volumes.
{Note: Marc Antony gave them to Cleopatra of Egypt.}
 7. Pergamos still exists today in Turkey under the name BERGAMA with over 15,000 inhabitants.
- B. The Spiritual Condition of Pergamos
1. The phrase in verse 13 that describes the city as “Satan’s seat” should give us a clue as to the LORD’s perspective of their condition.
 2. The worship of so many false gods and the demonic influence that is associated with idolatry made Pergamos the perfect place for Satan to house his headquarters.
 3. The spiritual climate of Pergamos was one of devious and deadly Satanism.
- C. The Supernatural Church of Pergamos
1. The founder of the church is unknown. Paul passed through the province of Mysia, of which Pergamos was the capital, on his first missionary journey in Acts 16:7-8.
 2. The church was possibly pastored by Antipas, who was martyred.
{Note: According to Christian tradition, John the Apostle ordained Antipas as bishop of Pergamos during the reign of the Roman emperor Domitian. The traditional account goes on to say Antipas was martyred in 92 AD by burning in a brazen bull-shaped altar used for casting out demons worshiped by the local population.}
 3. The church as Smyrna was in the “Synagogue of Satan,” while the church at Pergamos was in the “Seat of Satan.”
 4. The church at Pergamos was founded in the midst of a most wicked religious culture.
 5. This church possibly represents the period of time from 313 to 590 A.D. The people of this church period suffered relatively little persecution.
- D. The Sovereign Counselor of the Church of Pergamos (2:12b): Jesus says He is the One Who has the “sharp sword with two edges...”
1. It is that sword mentioned in Rev. 1:16. It is the Word of God (Heb. 4:12) Jesus mentions the cutting sword because He is going to cut off the heretics who have infiltrated the church.
 2. The sword comes to divide the false from the true; to destroy heresy and uplift truth.

E. The Superb Commendation of the Church of Pergamos (2:13)

“I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith...”

1. God recognized their **circumstances**.
2. God recognized their **steadfastness**.
 - a. Jesus commended them for their public stand for His name.
 - b. The name of Jesus stands for all that He has done and all that He is. To deny His name is to deny His honor, His glorious nature, His holy character and His redeeming power.
 - c. The name of Jesus brings:
 - (1) Salvation – John 1:12, Acts 4:12
 - (2) Answers to prayer – John 15:16, 16:23-24
 - (3) Persecution – Matthew 10:22
 - (4) Reward for those who forsake all for it – Matthew 19:29.
3. God recognized their **faith**... They had not lost faith in Him.
4. God recognized their **leader**. - “..., even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.”
 - a. Antipas had been a living example to them in the face of death.
 - b. He was martyred in their presence “...who was slain among you..” and yet they maintained their faithfulness.

F. The Stinging Chastening of the Church of Pergamos (2:14-15)

“But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate. ”

1. The church had tolerated those who held to the doctrine (or counsel) of Balaam. Numbers 22-25 tells of the doctrine or counsel of Balaam.
2. Balaamism propagated the intermarrying and fornication of God's people with the people of the world.
3. 24,000 Israelites were destroyed because they followed Balaam's counsel.
4. The church at Pergamos had allowed those who followed this philosophy to infiltrate its ranks. {Note: God STILL expects His people to remain unspotted from the world.}

5. They church had also allowed those who follow the “doctrine of the Nicolaitanes” to belong to the church unchallenged.
 - a. The name” Nicolaitanes” comes from two greek words: “Nike” – which means “Victory” and “Laos” - which means “People or Laity.” It means “Victory or **Dominance** over the Laity or People.”
 - b. The teaching of the Nicolaitanes insists that there is a great distinction between the clergy and the laity, thus stripping all believers of their individual priesthood.
 - c. The Nicolaitanes were the beginning of what we know as the **Catholic** form of Church government.

G. The Stern Counsel to the Church of Pergamos (2:16)

“Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.”

1. The charge of **repentance** was given to the church for allowing the heretics to go unchallenged.
2. The promise of **destruction** was given to the ones who held these false doctrines.
3. **Doctrine** is important!!

H. The Solemn Challenge to the Church of Pergamos (2:17)

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.”

1. To those with spiritual perception and endurance, Jesus promised special blessings: hidden manna and a white stone with a hidden name.
 - a. The hidden manna references the fresh Word of God for the journey in this life.
 - b. The white stone with the new name references the acquittal of charges that have been levied against a believer. The Lord’s judgement being seen in thought here.
2. These were rewards (earned) for steadfastness...not salvation.

The Hidden Manna and White Stone

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 that no one knows except him who receives it. (Revelation 2:17)

The overcomer *alone* has been promised that he will be allowed to partake of the “*hidden manna*” and will be given a “*white stone*” with a “*new name*” in the stone, which no man will know other than the one receiving it.

1) *The Hidden Manna*

“Manna” is found in both the Old and New Testaments, but the “*hidden manna*” is found only in the third overcomer’s promise in the book of **Revelation**. The Israelites were provided manna during their pilgrim journey between Egypt and Canaan; and Christians, in like manner, have been provided Manna during their pilgrim journey between the antitype of Egypt (the world) and the antitype of Canaan (a heavenly land, wherein Christians will realize an inheritance). And any teaching concerning the future “*hidden manna*” must be drawn from past and present appearances of the manna as a provision for God’s people.

(The fact that the future provision for God’s people is presently “*hidden*” may be an allusion to the manna that was kept “*before the Lord*” in the Holy of Holies of the tabernacle. This manna was placed in a “*golden pot*” within the Ark of the Covenant, *hidden* from the people but *visible* to God [**Exodus 16:14-35; John 6:48-54; Hebrews 9:2-4**]. So it is with the hidden manna during the present time. It is *hidden* from the people but *visible* to God.)

The manna given to the Israelites during the wilderness journey was a provision for their physical needs. This manna was a special food, prepared by God, containing everything necessary for the sustenance and well-being of the physical body. It was provided fresh day-by-day, and the Israelites were to gather and eat the manna after the fashion in which it was given. No supplementary food was provided or required.

The “*manna*” that the Israelites were given in the wilderness typified *Christ*, “*the living bread that came down from heaven*”; and this “*living bread*” is the provision that Christians have been given for their wilderness journey. Christians “*eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood*” (**John 6:48-54**) through the assimilation of the Word of God. This Word is a special food, prepared by God, containing everything necessary for the sustenance and well-being of the spiritual life.

The Spirit of God will render this food fresh day-by-day; and Christians are to partake of the *living Word* through the *written Word*, after the manner in which it has been given. No supplementary food has been provided; nor is any required.

The “*manna*” upon which Christians presently feed has been given to properly prepare and equip them for *the wilderness journey*, and the “*hidden manna*” can only be a parallel provision for *things beyond the wilderness journey*. The overcomers will be allowed to partake of the hidden manna to properly prepare and equip them as they rule and reign in the kingdom. The provision is “*manna*” *now* and “*hidden manna*” *yet future*, both given to equip Christians during particular periods for particular areas of service.

The “*hidden manna*” in the third overcomer’s promise and the “*tree of life*” in the first overcomer’s promise would have to be integrally related in this realm. Both are set forth as provisions to properly equip Christians as they rule and reign, both point to Christ (the true Manna, the true Tree of Life), and both together will form God’s complete provision for the rulers in the kingdom. However, a distinction must be drawn between the two, viewing each in the sense of a different facet of this provision.

Since partaking of the “*tree of life*” (**Revelation 2:7**) will provide that special wisdom and knowledge necessary to judge in equity, justice, and righteousness (ref. chapter 5 of this book), it can be safely assumed that partaking of the hidden manna will apparently constitute God’s provision to properly prepare overcoming Christians in all other realms of life. Such could possibly include physical needs as well as spiritual needs.

Not that much has been revealed about the resurrection body. Christ partook of food in His resurrection body (**Luke 24:41-43; John 21:5-14**; cf. **Matthew 26:29**), but the reason for His partaking of food or details

surrounding the matter are not given. If the resurrection body requires sustenance for the rigors of the office Christians are to hold, the hidden manna will apparently provide that sustenance, along with any other requirements for sustenance that Christians may possess.

2) *The White Stone, New Name*

During the days in which the book of **Revelation** was written, and days prior to that time, giving one a white stone meant that the person had been charged with some offense but had been acquitted; he had been shown as justified. Since works alone will be reviewed at the judgment seat, justification shown by the white stone must emanate out of a judgment of works. Justification on the basis of Christ's finished work at Calvary cannot be in view at all, for overcomers and non-overcomers alike would receive such a stone if that were the case. A white stone will be given to every Christian whose works endure the fire, revealing justification on the basis of that coming under judgment — *works emanating out of faithfulness* (ref. chapter 3 of this book).

A white stone was also given to the victor in a contest or battle, which is exactly what is in view through overcoming. Christians are presently in a battle, a warfare, against "*principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world* ['age'], *against spiritual wickedness in high places* ['against the spirit forces of wickedness in the heavenlies']" (**Ephesians 6:12**). And Satan and his angels use the world and the flesh in their never-ceasing efforts to bring about a Christian's defeat. It is *the victor* — the one overcoming *the world, the flesh, and the devil* — that the promised white stone will be given.

With the preceding in mind, understanding the white stone, along with the new name in the stone, can possibly best be seen in Joseph's exaltation by the Pharaoh of Egypt. Joseph, because of his faithfulness to God, was, through divine providence, brought into a position of such favor with Pharaoh that he found himself exalted to the throne. Pharaoh took his own ring and "*put it on Joseph's hand; and he clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck.*" He then positioned him as "*ruler over all the land of Egypt,*" and bestowed upon him a new name — "*Zaphnath-paaneah*" (**Genesis 41:39-45**).

The white stone will identify the overcomer as the one shown justified, victorious in conquest, and elevated to noble rank. As Joseph in the type, he will be placed in the position of a ruler and be given a new name. Joseph was placed over *all Egypt*, and the overcoming Christian will be placed over *all the earth* ("Egypt" is always a type of *the world* in Scripture). He will then be given "*a new name . . . that no one knows except him who receives it.*"

Such is the present prospect set before Christians, as given in the overcomers' promise to the church in Pergamos.

Concluding Thoughts:

When overcoming Christians go forth to rule with Christ in the kingdom, everything will be in a state of readiness. Through the provision of *the tree of life, the hidden manna, the white stone, and the new name*, Christians will be properly equipped *for every facet of life in the kingdom* as they rule the nations with Christ. They will be given *wisdom and knowledge* to rule in equity, justice, and righteousness; they will be provided with the necessary *sustenance* (physical and/or spiritual) to equip them for the office that they are to hold; they will be given *identifying stones*, showing their victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; and the One with whom they are to rule as co-heirs will know them by *a new name*.

Through God's provision, *a perfect rule* will issue forth when man is once again brought back into the position for which he was originally created. All authority in that day will emanate from *one throne* (cf. **Revelation 2:26, 27; 3:21**), and nothing short of *an absolute rule* will suffice.

[1] Taken from Arlen L. Chitwood's book, *Judgment Seat of Christ*, The Lamp Broadcast, Inc., pp. 115-118