

OVERCOMING THE DEGRADATION OF THE CHURCH BY EATING THE HIDDEN MANNA TO BE TRANSFORMED INTO WHITE STONES FOR GOD'S BUILDING

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The epistle to the church in Pergamos was written two thousand years ago, yet its relevance has not diminished with the passage of time. In fact, the same problems facing the church in Pergamos continue to plague the church today, and thus, the Spirit continues to sound forth a call for believers to overcome Pergamos's characteristic form of degradation. Regrettably, the true significance of the Lord's speaking to the church in Pergamos is lost on most believers. By failing to consider this epistle from the perspective of God's eternal economy—God's plan to impart Himself in Christ as life into the believers for the producing of the church as His dwelling place, His corporate expression—most commentators have missed the root cause of, and thereby the intrinsic remedy to, Pergamos's decline as well as the final goal for the overcoming believers. The key lies in two crucial rewards promised to the overcomers—the hidden manna and a white stone—which together encapsulate the entire biblical revelation concerning life and building. According to the divine thought in the book of Revelation and in the entire Holy Scriptures, the believers are produced as overcomers, conquer the fallen condition of the church, and are transformed to become precious stones for the building up of God's eternal habitation by eating the Lord as the hidden manna, the bread of life.

Some commentaries do provide insight into certain facets of the church's decline—Pergamos's union with the world under Satan's rule, the teaching of Balaam as a teaching that produces idolatry and fornication, and the teaching of the Nicolaitans as a teaching that promotes religious hierarchy. However, few commentators have seen the eating of the hidden manna as the organic antidote to the problems in Pergamos, nor have they seen that the building up of the church as the temple of God is the ultimate objective of the believers' overcoming.

The Church Married to the World

The Lord Jesus begins His epistle to the church in Pergamos by exposing her affiliation with Satan, God's enemy and adversary: "I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is...among you, where Satan dwells" (Rev. 2:13). The place where Satan dwells and the place where Satan's throne is refer to the world, for Satan is "he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4) and is "the ruler of this world" (John 12:31; 16:11). In this context the world refers to an evil, anti-God system arranged by Satan to occupy people for the formation of his kingdom and to hinder them from loving God and accomplishing His purpose (1 John 2:15-17). In the apostle John's view, "the whole world lies in the evil one," remaining in the sphere of his pernicious influence and under his insidious usurpation and manipulation (5:19). This indicates that Satan's throne, which is associated with his kingdom, is in the world, the place of his dwelling and the sphere of his reign. In Revelation 2:13 the Greek word translated "dwell"