



The DAILY JESUS NEWS #358
The Eternal Ministry of Jesus in Heaven
The Continuing Words and Works of the Risen Jesus Throughout Eternity Future

**Jesus Speaks to the Church in Pergamum,
And All Believers Who Will Listen**
Rev. 2.12-17

=====

12 *"I command you to write to the messenger of the church in Pergamum:*

"This is what the One who has the sharp, double-edged sword is saying.

13 *"I know where you are living – where Satan makes his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, not even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city – where Satan is living.*

14 *"Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: There are some among you who hold fast to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to toss stumbling blocks before the Israelites, so that they ate food sacrificed to idols and committed sexual immorality. 15 Likewise, you also have those who hold firmly to the teaching of the Nicolaitans.*

16 *"Therefore, I command you to repent! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will go to battle against them with the sword of my mouth.*

17 *"Whoever has ears, I command them to hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give that person a white stone with a new name permanently engraved on it, known only to the one who receives it."*

=====

NOTE: We use superscript identification of the source gospel in "blended texts" as follows: Matthew = ^{MT}, Mark = ^M, Luke = ^L, John = ^J, Acts = ^A. This "superscript ID" is inserted at the beginning of the quoted text, identifying that Bible book until a different superscript appears. In addition, *red italics identify the words of Jesus*. Old Testament quotations are CAPITALIZED.

	CONTEXT DIGEST
Location	On the Greek Island of Patmos, Just Off the Coast of Turkey
Timeline	About 60 Years After Jesus Ascended
Jesus' Life Context	Stage IX: The Resurrection and Eternal Ministry of Jesus
	Jesus' Eternal Ministry in Heaven

	The Continuing Words and Works of the Risen Jesus Throughout Eternity Future
Title:	Jesus Speaks to the Church in Pergamum and All Believers Who Will Listen

Jesus praised the Church in Pergamum, and only gave it a partial rebuke. His message to this Church is perhaps the most difficult to understand, because some of the things he spoke of that were common concepts in the first century have been lost in the many cultural changes that stand between our world and theirs. However, the key ideas that Jesus communicated in this text are clear to us today. Once again we will note the what Jesus said in each of the four sections of this brief letter.

(1) Jesus identified himself as the one who has the sharp, two-edged sword of the Word of God (3.12). John described this sword as coming out of Jesus' mouth in his vision of the risen Jesus in Chapter 1. The Sword is the Message that Jesus speaks--the Word of God. Furthermore, Jesus spoke of doing battle with unrepentant believers with the "sword of my mouth" (2.16). The Title of "Word of God" is a primary Name for Jesus in the writings of John.

(2) Jesus' spiritual diagnosis began with praise again. In spite of being in a city where Satan was actively at work in stirring up intense persecution against the believers, they had remained faithful to Jesus in spite of the persecution. They did not renounce their faith in Jesus by denying him, even when it meant that some of their number were martyred. Jesus mentioned one martyr in particular, Antipas.

Jesus also rebuked a portion of this Church in two areas. Some of the believers were compromising their standards of obedience to Jesus' Word, and encouraging others to do the same. Like Balaam in the Old Testament (Numbers 22-24), who was willing to sell the Word of God for personal gain, some in Pergamum were encouraging others in sin. Jesus had taught during his earthly ministry that true kingdom greatness includes being careful to give a good example to others (DJN #137; MT 18.7-9; PT MK 9.43-50). These believers were failing to do that. It was a failure to love.

Jesus added that some believers were holding to the teachings of the Nicolaitans. We do not know who this group was, or what they taught. However, their name means "ruler over the common people--the laity." This may indicate a beginning of the clergy/laity split in the ranks of the believers, in which some were "priests" and others were "lay." In any case, Jesus had spoken vehemently about the wrong of making distinctions between believers on the final day of his public ministry: Tuesday of Passion Week. Whatever was happening in Pergamum, these words of Jesus addressed it.

5^{MT} "Everything they do (the Pharisees) is done for people to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long; 6 they adore the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; 7 they^M delight to walk around in flowing robes and^{MT} love to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces and to be called 'Rabbi' by others.

8 "But I command you not to be called "Rabbi," for you have one Teacher, and you are all brothers. 9 And I command you not to call anyone on earth "father," for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. 10 I command you not to be called "Leader," for you have one Leader, the Messiah.

11 "The greatest among you will be your servant. 12 For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted. (DJN #260; MT 23.5-11)

(3) Jesus therefore commanded repentance regarding these two issues among the Pergamum believers who were tainted by these attitudes. He promised that he would speak more of his confronting, convicting Word toward those who remained unrepentant.

(4) Jesus' final promise to those who were victorious over these sins was twofold: "hidden manna" and a new name written on a white stone. The "manna" spoke of the spiritual strengthening and nourishment that only comes from doing God's will. Jesus had spoken in Samaria, at the end of the early Judean stage of his ministry, of having special food to eat:

"I, myself, always have food to eat that you know nothing about. My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work." (DJN # 047; JN 4.32,34) Obedience was the "hidden manna" that sustained Jesus.

The white stone with a new name written on it signified the complete transformation of character into Christ's likeness that is the fruit of a lifetime of obedience. People received a new name when they had experienced a complete change in their character. A new name was appropriate to having become a different person. Jesus plans to transform each of us into a new person who is like him. This is indicated by being a "white" stone, which expressed Jesus' pure righteousness. Each believer is a "stone" in the Temple of the Holy Spirit--His corporate dwelling place.

A new white stone with a new name then, was a reward from Jesus honoring the complete transformation that had been achieved in his faithful, obedient disciple. Only Jesus and the individual believer would know everything that had gone into becoming worthy of this precious gift. It would be their private, special shared secret.

APPLICATION:

We believers must be passionately in love with Jesus in an exclusive way (Ephesus). That devotion will lead us to suffer any form of persecution and especially martyrdom as a precious privilege and high honor (Smyrna). That supreme devotion will also cause us to love others by being careful about the influence of our example. We will model a lifestyle that rejoices in obedience (Pergamum). Each of these attitudes will result in incomprehensibly great eternal rewards from Jesus. He commands to listen carefully to his Word through the seven Churches of Asia.

Jesus warned some believers in Pergamum about leading others into sin, like Balaam did, and seeking special recognition for a "position" we might hold in the Church, that others do not have. Rather, we should seek to be the loving servant of all, just as Jesus is the greatest servant in all creation.

Do you enjoy special recognition for the positions of leadership you might hold?

Is your example to others the same as Jesus' example to you, on a lesser scale? Does your example lead people away from obedience to Jesus? Is there any repentance you need to embrace?

Serious consideration of questions like these is a crucial part of listening to Jesus' message to each of us through the Church in Pergamum.

What is the Spirit saying you need to do?