This morning we’re going to be continuing our series in the book of Revelation.

Before we open God’s Word, however, let’s come to the Lord in prayer. Let’s pray.

Father, as we come to your Word this morning, I pray that you would open our eyes. Lord, in this late hour, we see the evidence all around us that the return of your Son is near. Enable us, Lord, to see the letter to this church this morning in its rightful context: in the light of the return of Jesus Christ. Send Your Holy Spirit to convict and to challenge, to call us to account, that we might be true representatives of the Lord Jesus in our time here on earth. ...and above all things, Father, may the glory and the honour be yours. Glorify yourself through this message, Lord, that you might have the preeminence in all things.

In Jesus’ Name. Amen.

We’re going to be looking this morning at the letter, written by Jesus Christ, to the church at Pergamos. We have a lot to cover this morning – partly because of the extent of the history behind this city, but partly also because many of the topics that we’ll be discussing today will be of great importance later in the book of Revelation. As a result, I’m not going to recap on how far we’ve come through this incredible book – I’m just going to dive right in.

Open your Bibles with me to Revelation, chapter 2 and verse 12.

12 “And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, ‘These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword:

13 “I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

14 But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality.

15 Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.

16 Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.
“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 which no one knows except him who receives it.”

There’s a lot to cover in this passage, so we’re going to dive right in this morning. As with each of the letters in the book of Revelation, there is a lot of history to cover if we’re going to understand what the Lord Jesus is saying.

To begin with, let’s look briefly at the city of Pergamos itself.

The history of Pergamos

Pergamos (which is also called Pergamum in some Bibles (following the Latin) is located 64 miles north of Ephesus, where our journey through these seven churches began, and around 24 miles north of Smyrna, which we looked at last time we turned to the book of Revelation. Pergamos was founded in roughly 420BC, and quickly established itself as a cultural and economic centre in Asia Minor. By 282BC, it had become the capital of the ‘Kingdom of Pergamum’, under the rule of the Attalid kings. Under their patronage, Pergamos became home to one of the greatest libraries in antiquity, containing over 200,000 manuscripts, which for a time rivalled even the Great Library at Alexandria. When the Ptolemies in Egypt stopped exporting papyrus (partly because of competition, partly because of shortages), the sages in Pergamos invented a new product to use in scrolls and codices, which they named “pergamena”, after the city. This new form became so popular, and its production so prolific, that it is from Pergamos that we get our word ‘parchment’, through the Latin ‘Pergamenum’.

If we’re going to understand the history of Pergamos, however, we have to go back to the time of Daniel, and to the capture of Babylon by Cyrus the Great in 539BC. Cyrus was the King that ultimately became responsible for the Jews’ return from exile to their homeland in Israel, issuing a decree that not only permitted their return, but provided resources for them to commence rebuilding. ...but did you know that Cyrus’ relationship with the Jews was written in advance, by the prophet Isaiah, some 150 years before his birth? Listen to these words from Isaiah 44 and 45:

I am the Lord... Who says of Cyrus, ‘He is My shepherd,
And he shall perform all My pleasure,
Saying to Jerusalem, “You shall be built,”
And to the temple, “Your foundation shall be laid.”'
Now, if it’s not amazing enough that the Lord had Isaiah pen this prophecy 150 years before Cyrus was even born, we know from history that the prophet Daniel actually presented this passage to Cyrus on a scroll upon his conquest of Babylon – and Cyrus was so impressed that he did indeed issue a decree allowing Jerusalem to be rebuilt. The story is even more incredible than that, however. Listen again.

“Thus says the Lord to His anointed,
To Cyrus, whose right hand I have held—
To subdue nations before him
And loose the armor of kings,
To open before him the double doors,
So that the gates will not be shut.”

These verses are just amazing. I’m not sure if you’ve ever heard the story of Cyrus’ conquest of Babylon, but when he approached the city, he sent some of his men out to divert the course of the Euphrates river, which flowed both through the center, and around the city of Babylon, like a moat. With the river diverted, the Persian army had to do little more than walk down the dry river bed and enter the city. Nebuchadnezzar’s armor was loosed, and he was left defenseless. Cyrus’ men entered through the large, wide-open double doors of the floodgates, and conquered the city without so much as a single battle. So peaceful, in fact, was his conquest of Babylon that there were citizens within the city walls that didn’t know that they were under new leadership for four days. If that’s not evidence of the God who “makes the end known from the beginning”, I really don’t know what is.

So, how does this relate to Pergamos? Well, there was a side-effect to Cyrus’ conquest of Babylon. As a Persian King, Cyrus brought with him a priestly caste with whom you are no doubt already familiar: The Magi. What this meant, however, was that the existing priesthood in Babylon, known as the Chaldeans, suddenly, alarmingly, found themselves out of a job. In response, they fled for their lives, travelled northwest, and made their home in Pergamos.

Look with me again at verse 12.

*And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write,*
*“these things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword:*
*I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is.”*
We’re going to come back to the sharp two-edged sword, so let’s just leave that where it is for now, but there is an extremely provocative title in this passage that demands an explanation. The Lord says “I know where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is.”

I’d suggest that there are multiple relevant explanations for the Lord’s use of this term, and I’d suggest that in some measure, they’re all applicable.

**Where Satan’s Throne Is**

The first explanation is that Pergamos was the center of pagan idolatry throughout the world, particularly at the time that John wrote his gospel. You see, when the Babylonian Priesthood fled from Cyrus the great, they didn’t leave their religion behind – and in fact, much of what we know as Greek and Roman mythology can be traced back to the paganism of Chaldeans and their arrival in Pergamos. In the years following this event, Pergamos emerged as the world’s leading exporter of pagan idolatry. Allow me to give you an example. Some of you may be familiar with the two chief figures of the Babylonian religion. These were the widow of Nimrod, Semiramis, and her son, Tammuz. When transplanted from their original Babylonian context, Semiramis and Tammuz became Aphrodite and Eros in Greece, and Venus and Cupid in Rome. These mythologies prospered greatly in their new home, and in no time at all, shrines and temples dedicated to gods such as Jupiter, Zeus, Athena, Dionysius and Aesculapius were built in the Pergamos, each with their own unique set of customs and worship.

There is a Biblical connection here, however, that suggests that this reference isn’t merely addressing the degree of idolatry in this city.

The primary deity in Pergamos was the Greek god of medicine and healing, Aesculapius. The dominant depiction of Aesculapius in the ancient world was that of a bearded man, bearing a staff entwined by a serpent. Now, if you know your Bible, that should make your ears prick up. You might recognize this symbol from the book of Numbers. In Chapter 21, we read that the Isralites had grumbled against the Lord and against His provision for them while they travelled through the desert. In response, the Lord sent “fiery serpents” among the people, and many had died. What follows, however, is one of the most unusual passages in Scripture. Listen. This is from Numbers 24, and verse 8.

Having listened to the people’s cries for forgiveness,
...the Lord said to Moses, “Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live.” So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.

Now, I think you’ll happily admit that this is really odd... and in fact, if it weren’t for the Lord Jesus Himself, we probably wouldn’t understand what was happening here; but Jesus Himself clarifies, and it leads us to one of the best known verses in the Bible. Listen to these verses from John chapter 3:

14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. 15 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

We can see the Biblical imagery clearly, with the benefit of the Lord’s own clarification: the staff represents the fact that the Son of Man would be “raised up” on a wooden cross; the brass, the fact that “he who knew no sin became sin for us”, making him a symbol of God’s own righteous judgment, while the snake represents the embodiment of sin itself.

What we see here in Pergamos is that the devil - “that old serpent” as he’s described in Revelation 20, has taken this image of the Lord Jesus Christ, and perverted it into his own in the false god, Aesculapius. ...and in commanding this image as his own, in forging his own pagan shadow of that beautiful reality found in Jesus Christ, the devil has taken that which is good – an image and icon that was representative of the healing that is ours in Christ, and turned it into a false god.

What this suggests to us is that Pergamos, with this highly focused distortion of the gospel of Jesus Christ, was a place of great importance to the devil. In fact, I’d go so far as to argue that, as the literal reading of the text suggests, that Pergamos was quite literally the place where Satan had established his throne. We must remember, when speaking of the devil, that we are not dealing with an omnipotent force. Satan is not like the Almighty. He is neither omnipotent, nor omnipresent. His power is limited in both time and space. This is borne out by Scripture, where Satan is described as “the prince of the power of the air” in Ephesians 2:2, giving His dominion a specific location, and the “god of this world” in 2 Corinthians 4:4, which grants him a throne. This is confirmed by the fact that the devil tempted the Lord Jesus in the desert by offering Him “all the kingdoms of the world” if he would but kneel. We need to realize that this would have been no temptation at all, were it not in his power to offer in the first place.
What this passage, and its connections to Biblical history suggest, is that the throne of Satan has been, and is located in the primary center of pagan idolatry in the world. For a time, that center was Babylon. Upon the departure of the Chaldeans under Cyrus, however, this throne moved from Babylon, to Pergamos. We’ll see its transfer from Pergamos to Rome in a moment... and when we reach Revelation 17, we’ll see that Satan’s throne will move once more back to Babylon, to a place prepared for a final showdown with the King of Kings.

The Compromised Church

I suggested to you in my previous sermon that the city of Smyrna had been ‘passionately idolatrous’ – and indeed it was – but what we have here in Pergamos is something different entirely. While Smyrna was considered to be a significant outpost of pagan worship, Pergamos was literally the seat of satanic religion; a nexus where Babylonian, Greek and Roman paganism met, and thrived.

I’m sure you can imagine the effect this had on the church. You might remember that during the sermon on the letter to Smyrna, I detailed for you the death of Polycarp, who had been burned alive at the hands of the Jews in that city. Well, if you thought that persecution didn’t get much worse, you were wrong. Look with me at verse 13.

_I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells._

There are two things to notice here. The first is that there is a hint of the history of the church in Pergamos. They had once been much like Smyrna; suffering patiently for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ. Despite persecution, they refused to deny the faith – “even in the days in which Antipas was the Lord’s faithful martyr”. Notice the hint of progression here, too: in the days of Antipas, Satan dwelled in the city. In the days of the Pergamos church, he rules there. It’s difficult historically to nail down the person of Antipas, but tradition suggests that he too was burned alive. The story in this instance, however, is even more horrific than that of Polycarp, if that were possible. Antipas was burned alive, not tied to a stake, but locked inside the belly of a giant bronze bull that was set in the midst of a great fire. This is horrific persecution... but while the church in Smyrna persisted, and endured, and patiently waited on the Lord in its hour of trial, the church at Pergamos did not. Let’s read on. Verse 14.
But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality.

For those who are unfamiliar with the story of Balaam, I’ll elaborate. Balaam was a diviner whose story takes us back again to the book of Numbers. In chapter 22 of that book, Balaam is contacted by the Moabite King, Balak. Listen to the opening verses.

Then the children of Israel moved, and camped in the plains of Moab on the side of the Jordan across from Jericho.

2 Now Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites. 3 And Moab was exceedingly afraid of the people because they were many, and Moab was sick with dread because of the children of Israel. 4 So Moab said to the elders of Midian, “Now this company will lick up everything around us, as an ox licks up the grass of the field.”

In response to this fear, Balak contacted Balaam with one simple request:

...please come at once, curse this people for me, for they are too mighty for me. Perhaps I shall be able to defeat them and drive them out of the land, for I know that he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed.”

The rest of the story follows a simple, repeated pattern. Four times, Balaam attempts to curse the children of Israel. Four times, the Lord prevents him, and causes him to bless Israel instead. ...but what Balaam couldn’t accomplish with a curse, he was able to achieve through a loophole. We find later in the book of numbers that Balaam has led the women of Moab to seduce the men of Israel. There are two reasons why he did this – the first is that he was attempting to cause the Lord to do what he could not: to curse the Israelites because of their own unfaithfulness to Him. In this, Balaam was successful; 24 thousand men died in the judgment that followed. There was a second motive, however, and I believe it’s this that the Lord is referring to in this letter to the church at Pergamos.

What Balaam sought to do was to encourage the children of Israel to compromise and marry itself to the world for the sake of circumventing what seemed like an inevitable conflict. This is precisely the situation we find here in Pergamos, and it’s this that is referred to as “the doctrine of Balaam”. The church in Pergamos had, for the sake of avoiding the great persecution endured by the church at Smyrna, and the early church in its own city, willingly married itself to the world. This is, in fact, what the name ‘Pergamos’
means – ‘improper marriage’ – and it was this mixed marriage that led to sexual immorality and the consumption of food sacrificed to idols within the church.

This idea of mixed marriage is also what brings us to the prophetic application of this passage. I’ve suggested to you previously that each of these letters has multiple levels of application. In the letter to the church of Pergamos, the prophetic angle really is key to understanding the passage in its entirety.

The church at Pergamos is representative of the birth of the Catholic Church under the Emperor Constantine. Constantine, you may know, was responsible for legalizing Christianity throughout the Roman Empire, allowing Christians to worship without persecution for the first time. This transition, however, was not without consequence. The church found itself increasingly moving closer toward the seat of power in Rome, and this mixed marriage bore fruit whose seeds had been sown in Babylon. Constantine himself had always been a very shrewd political operator. As an example, when Constantine overcame his singular rival for the Empire, Maximian, he refused to have him executed, but instead, according to historians, “strongly encouraged him to commit suicide”. In doing so, Constantine spared himself an inevitable political backlash, and united both loyalists and rebels under his own rule.

Constantine was similarly shrewd when it came to supporting the church. Rather than merely transferring power from Pagan Rome to Christian Constantinople, Constantine subtly introduced pagan elements into Christian worship, and Christian elements into pagan practices and feast days, thus reconciling the two. For the first time, both Christians and pagans could worship on the same day, and even at the same festivals, without conflict. ...and with the introduction of Christians into high-ranking offices under Constantine’s rule, the Church gradually began to reform itself into a political entity. This brings us to our next verse - Revelation chapter 2, and verse 15:

_Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate._

What we first saw in the church at Ephesus as “the deeds of the Nicolaitans” has now developed into _doctrine_. This word, broken down into its composite parts, gives its meaning. “Nicolaitan” comes from the Greek words “nikao”, meaning “to prevail”, or “lord over”, and “laos”, meaning “The People” – used most typically to refer to “the people of God”. The Church, having passed from fear into favour, began to model itself after Roman systems of governance, and began to reflect the world more than it reflected Christ. What this meant in practical terms was that the Nicolaitan doctrine of establishing lords or bishops to rule over the people of God passed from deed into doctrine, gave birth to an ecclesiastical hierarchy, which, like so many other elements of this passage, was really little more than thinly veiled Babylonian idolatry.
Perhaps the most startling and obvious example I can give you is the title of the head of the church. When the Chaldean priesthood made their move from Babylon to Pergamos, they took with them their own High Priest. In the transference from the Babylonian to Roman context, their high priest took on a new name, and a new title. That title was “Pontifex Maximus”. To this very day, that title remains the chief identifier of the head and father of the Catholic Church. And so it was that the idolatry that had for so long characterized religion in Babylon became the hallmark of a compromised Christian faith.

**A Crushing Response**

So... how does this apply to us? It’s easy to imagine this all as a far-removed conflict, particularly with all its talk of idolatry and bronze snakes and food sacrificed to idols; but the Lord doesn’t leave this option open to us. Remember that the Lord has written these letters to “he who has an ear”. That’s you. It’s you, and it’s me.

I don’t imagine that this worldly compromise happened in Pergamos overnight. I don’t imagine that the church had willingly flung wide the doors of the church to openly embrace paganism. In fact, this letter suggests to us that that’s not the case at all. “You hold fast to My name”, the Lord says; “and did not deny my faith”. So what went wrong? How did the church at Pergamos fail to keep the world at bay? How did it manage to marry itself to the world without realizing the obvious consequences of doing so?

The answer to this is offered in advance, before the Lord even expresses his concern. Look at verse 12.

*These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword...*

...and verse 16:

*Repent, or else I will come to you quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.*

We know, don’t we, what this sword represents. Scripture doesn’t leave us in the dark. Ephesians 6, verse 11 and 17 say this:

*Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil... [taking] the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.”*
The aspect of His character that the Lord Jesus highlights here in Revelation is the very same aspect that the church in Pergamos had neglected. They had failed to continue to do what Scripture commands that we must:

From 1 Thessalonians 5:21:  *Examine everything carefully. Hold fast to that which is good. Abstain from every form of evil.*

From 1 John 4:1:  *do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, to see if they are of God.*

This was the primary failing of the church at Pergamos: they had neglected to preserve the centrality of the Word of God, in power, in deed, and in doctrine, and had left themselves vulnerable to the ever encroaching wickedness of the world as a result; so much so, in fact, that when this ‘mixed marriage’ took place, they neither saw it coming, nor recognized that it had taken place after the fact.

What we cannot afford to do here is to allow ourselves the luxury of imagining that we are exempt from the same failings that were found in this church. While we may not see giant marble idols being erected in our churches, or food sacrificed to idols being paraded through our pews, this spirit of compromise still lives on today.

How many of our churches have made peace with the world in order to bring people through the doors? How many have employed worldly music in order to catch the crowds and appeal to a broader audience?

Why do we do these things?

Are we ashamed of the gospel?

Ultimately, that’s what this boils down to. The church has forgotten that the power of God to transform lives, the power of God for the salvation of all who believe, is the gospel. *It’s the gospel!* What’s even worse is that Scripture anticipated this issue in advance; Paul recognized that the gospel message would be “foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us, who are being saved, it is the power of God”. And yet, rather than accepting what Scripture has told us - that there would be those who would reject the very message that would bring them life - we seek answers in the world for a problem that only the gospel has ever had the power to solve.
What we need to understand - what the church of God needs to understand - is that the gospel hasn’t changed. The power of God hasn’t transferred from the gospel to entertainment, or to worldly music, to eloquent sermons or convincing apologetics. The power of God is the gospel! This is why Paul says in 2 Corinthians, chapter 4 and verse 7, “we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves”. These “earthen vessels” are not by accident, as if they can be improved upon by a church in touch with the world, but by design, so that the world might see and know that there is One God, One Authority, and One King... and that His Name is Jesus Christ... and that at that name, every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

This is why our churches are so ineffectual, why church numbers are in constant decline, and why we seem so utterly incapable of drawing people to Jesus Christ – because we have forgotten that the power of the church is found in the incomparable Word of God, which is powerful and effective, able to divide between soul and spirit – and we have been given no other weapon.

While this is true of churches, it remains equally true of individuals. Without the power of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, the Christian is powerless, and defenseless against the ever encroaching influence of the world. ...and while the Lord encourages this church to adhere steadfastly to the Scriptures, He also warns them that, should they not repent, He will “fight against them with the sword of [His] mouth”.

In order to understand this, we need to look at Revelation 19. Turn with me to Revelation 19, and verse 11.

Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. 12 His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. 13 He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. 14 And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. 15 Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. 16 And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written:

KING OF KINGS AND
LORD OF LORDS.
In this passage, the Lord returns, prepared for war, and His armies are with Him. When we understand that the Lord has sworn to fight against these people with the sword of His mouth, there is really only one logical conclusion to draw.

There will indeed be a church that goes through the Tribulation.

...but it will not be the church of Jesus Christ, but the apostate church of Babylon.

This is heavy. What the Lord is saying here is that the church at Pergamos, in its desire to make peace with the world, has arrived at the point where the gospel it is presenting no longer represents the gospel of Jesus Christ, but a false gospel, in which no salvation may be found. What a terrifying challenge that is to the church today – and what a great call to retain our gospel purity. So what had this church compromised? What is the gospel? Paul defines this for us in 1 Corinthians 15, so that we don’t have to wonder:

Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand,\(^2\) by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.

\(^3\)For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,\(^4\) and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,\(^5\) and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve.\(^6\) After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep.\(^7\) After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles.\(^8\) Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.

\(^9\)For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.\(^10\) But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.\(^11\) Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

This is the gospel – this is where the power of God for the salvation of all who believe rests. Cling to this truth, as if your very life depends on it – because it surely does.
This letter is not all warnings and threats, however. As in each of the letters we’ve explored so far, the Lord has a promise for those who overcome, and so it is here in Pergamos. Turn to verse 17.

“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 which no one knows except him who receives it.”

I’d love to be able to address this verse in greater length — and honestly, I suspect you could preach an entire sermon out of this single verse; but what I will say is this:

The Lord is well aware of the challenges that we face every day. He knows our struggles, He knows the world we live in, and He knows the conflict that we face, and He knows just how clever our adversary is. …and to those who overcome, there is promised a great reward.

We’re going to take the latter half of this verse first. To the overcomer, the Lord promises “a white stone, and on the stone and new name written, which no one knows except him who receives it.”

This is an intriguing verse, and one that has been argued over by scholars and historians. There are several theories as to what this white stone might represent. Some have suggested that this white stone was an image of an access pass to the games in the Roman Colosseum; others that the white stone represented a mark of innocence in a court of law, with a corresponding black stone indicating guilt. While either or both of these may be true, the argument misses the fundamental point. Turn with me back to Revelation 19 again, starting at verse 11.

Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. 12 His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. 13 He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.

What we need to see here, and what we need to understand, is that above all else, the overcomer will be made to be like Christ. Just as He has a new name, so too shall we. And just as we shall be made like Him, we shall also obtain Him. What Jesus Christ is promising to the overcomer here is himself. Look again at Revelation 2 and verse 17.

“To whom who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna to eat.”
This hidden manna has parallel symbolic applications. In the Old Testament, the hidden manna was placed within the Ark of the Covenant; a permanent reminder of God’s provision for His people in the desert. But in the New Testament, this hidden manna found its fulfilment in Christ. Listen to these verses... and I’ll close with this. John, chapter 6... beginning at verse 27.

_Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him._”

28 Then they said to Him, “What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?”

29 Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.”

30 Therefore they said to Him, “What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do? 31 Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”

32 Then Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. 33 For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

34 Then they said to Him, “Lord, give us this bread always.”

35 And Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life.

In this way, the Lord Jesus Christ promises the believer, the overcomer, the gift of Himself – and this, really, is the entire point of the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ: that God should reveal that which was previously hidden, through the Revelation of the King – and that we, through redemption, through restoration, and through an everlasting Kingship, will be His, forever and ever.

Let’s pray.