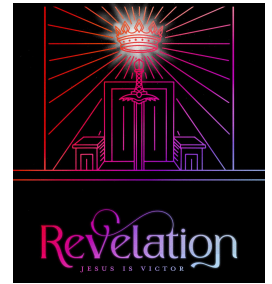


A message to Pergamum – Root out sin

Revelation 2:2-17

(Expanded Sermon Notes)



Pergamum was a significant religious center and a place that was very comfortable with religious pluralism and the mixing of incompatible ideas. Jesus begins by telling the church at Pergamum that he knows where they live. In other words, he understands the pressures (v 13) and temptations (v 14-16) they face. And “where you live” is also “where Satan lives” (v 13). Pergamum was full of pagan temples dominated by a massive altar to Zeus on the hill above the city. The first ever temple in honor of a living emperor, Emperor Augustus, was built at Pergamum in 29 BC. This may explain the reference to Pergamum being where Satan lives and has his throne (v 13). It also had a temple to Asclepius, the Greek god of healing, whose symbol was a snake, echoing Satan (12:9).¹ This setting and the constant pressure to water down, compromise, or an attitude to simply not take sin seriously had entered into the church.

The seven messages (or letters) to the seven churches of Asia minor help to give us a picture of the spiritual life and struggles of the churches in the first century. Oddly enough, while the first century feels so different and distant from us today, we experience many of the same struggles that they did. The church in Pergamum wasn’t in grave danger theologically speaking, nor were they doing exceptionally well. Instead, they were somewhere in the middle. Sin had crept into the church and into the community of believers. Sin that they had resisted at first, but over time they grew complacent, indifferent, or just worn out in the battle of resisting sin. Again, that is something that you and I can relate to. If we want to root out sin in our lives, we must remember this core truth, **sin never delivers on what it promises.**

¹ Chester, Tim. Revelation For You: Seeing history from heaven's perspective (p. 39). The Good Book Company. Kindle Edition.

1. Pergamum – A religious center.

- a. This was a place that needed a singularly authoritative voice to cut through the clutter of the religious plurality of the local culture. Much like the places that we have already looked at in the seven messages section, religious plurality and emperor worship was the norm. Pergamum had a few distinctives that will help us understand the message to them.
- b. The physical layout and history:
 - i. About 15 miles inland, it did not have a good trading position. But, apart from its administrative importance, **it was significant for its great library, said to have contained more than 200,000 parchment scrolls. Indeed, our word ‘parchment’ is derived from this name ‘Pergamum’.** It was an important religious center. People came from all over the world to be healed by the god Asclepius, and Pergamum has been described as ‘the Lourdes of the ancient world’. Zeus, Dionysus, and Athene also had notable temples in the city. Pergamum was a center of Caesar worship, and it had a temple dedicated to Rome as early as 29 bc. It attained the coveted title *neōkoros*, ‘temple-sweeper’, before either Smyrna or Ephesus, and took its devotion to emperor worship seriously. In due course it added a second and a third temple in honor of the emperor. It was the principal center of the imperial cult in this part of the world. But emperor worship was not its sole religious activity. Behind the city was a great conical hill, the site of a multitude of heathen temples.²
 - ii. **Pergamos, or Pergamum, was the provincial capital of Asia. If Ephesus was the “New York City” of Asia, Pergamos was its “Washington, D.C.”**³
- c. **Most notable – It was a city center on Asclepius the god of healing/ medicine.**
 - i. Asclepius was thought to be the son of Apollo (god of healing, truth, and prophecy) and the mortal princess Coronis.
 - ii. Zeus, Athene, Demeter, and Dionysus were also gods receiving significant cultic attention. The reference to “Satan’s throne” may also have been brought to mind because of the conical hill behind Pergamum which was the site of many temples, prominent among which was the throne-like altar of Zeus, which itself would have been sufficient to arouse the thought of the devil’s throne. 13:2 says that Satan gave the “beast” “his throne and great authority” (cf. 16:10); thus Satan works through the ungodly, earthly political power in Pergamum to persecute God’s people (see on 13:1ff.).⁴
- d. **The spiritual condition of the seven churches of Asia Minor.**
 - i. The seven churches all faced very real pressures, and the unique messages to them give us a window into their spiritual health and problems.
 - ii. The seven churches are arranged in a literary device known as, chiasm.
 - iii. In this light, the condition of the churches is presented in the literary form of a chiasm: a b c c c b a’. The significance of this is that the Christian church *as a whole* is perceived as being in poor condition, since not only are the healthy churches in a minority but the literary pattern points to this emphasis because the churches in the worst condition form the literary boundaries of the letters and the churches with serious problems form

² Leon Morris, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 20, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 69–70.

³ Steve Gregg, *Revelation, Four Views: A Parallel Commentary* (Nashville, TN: T. Nelson Publishers, 1997), 68.

⁴ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 246.

the very core of the presentation. This is highlighted as we recognize that at the center of the middle letter stands a general statement that “all the churches will know” that Christ is the omniscient judge of his unfaithful followers (2:23).⁵

1. (A) **Ephesus** – Grave warning.
 2. (B) **Smyrna** – Doing well... keep going.
 3. (C) **Pergamum** – Middle of the road.
 4. (C) **Thyatira** – Middle of the road.
 5. (C) **Sardis** – Middle of the road.
 6. (B) **Philadelphia** – Doing well... keep going.
 7. (A) **Laodicea** – Grave warning.
- iv. **A further pattern is to be discerned in the sevenfold arrangement.** Churches 1 and 7 are in grave danger, churches 2 and 6 are in excellent shape, churches 3, 4 and 5 are middling, neither very good nor very bad.⁶
1. **Only Sardis and Philadelphia do not receive a warning.**
- v. In Pergamum, we see the lure of sin that we all face and struggle with. (v.14)
- vi. Christians living there had to figure out a way to endure faithfully. The problem is the opposite of that in Ephesus. **An overemphasis on internal doctrinal purity can lead to a lack of concern for the outside world, whereas a deemphasis can lead to overidentification with the world.**⁷
1. We must heed the warning to this church and take sin seriously.

2. The lure of sin.

- a. What is sin? – A theology of sin. (3 angles)
- i. **Actions** – Sin is any evil action or evil motive that is in opposition to God. Simply stated, sin is failure to let God be God and placing something or someone in God’s rightful place of supremacy.⁸
 1. **Commission** – An ungodly action that I willingly do.
 2. **Omission** – a godly action that I willingly do not do
 - ii. **Dominion** – Sin is a principle of captivity to a power that permeates and contaminates our human reality. *Sin* is the word Christians use to name not simply our failed acts but also our inner and outer captivity.”⁹
 - iii. **Deficiency** – The desire to overcome our limitations and finitude because of anxiety about our creaturely existence.¹⁰
 1. **Empty promises** – The promises that sin makes to solve or fulfill our deficiencies are ultimately nothing but empty promises.
 2. The only one who can solve our deficiencies is the one who is not deficient.
 - iv. Each of these definitions gets at the full reality of sin.

⁵ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 226–227.

⁶ Leon Morris, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 20, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 63.

⁷ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 248.

⁸ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 513.

⁹ Rich Villodas, *The Deeply Formed Life* (Waterbrook, 2020) 99.

¹⁰ Reinhold Niebuhr via Scazzero, Peter. *The Emotionally Healthy Leader. How Transforming Your Inner Life Will Deeply Transform Your Church, Team, and the World*, (2015), 185.

1. **Yes, it involves our wrong or broken actions, but it is more than that. Yes, it is a power that captivates our present reality, but it won't always. Yes, it is part of a dysfunctional identity where we believe that we can overcome our finite limitations.**
- v. Each of these definitions are seen in the original fall of Adam and Eve. (Gen. 3:1-13)
 1. **Action** – They took and ate. (cf 3:6)
 2. **Deficiency** – “God is holding back on you... you can be God.” (cf. 3:1-5)
 - a. I.e., There is some limitation to overcome.
 - b. **The fundamental unbelief, distrust, and rejection of God and human displacement of God as the center of reality.** ¹¹
 3. **Dominion** – The resulting impact of their rebellious action is that of the dominion of sin. (cf. 3:7-13)
 - a. **Sin → Shame & Hiding → Pain → We want to find relief from the pain, so we often treat it with more sin. → Leads to more shame and pain, and the cycle continues.**
 - b. **The gospel – Jesus came not only to interrupt that cycle but to lead us into healing and restoration.**
 - i. Rom 5:20,21 - ²⁰ Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, ²¹ so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.
- b. **Sin in the Biblical perspective. → The Bible does not pull punches on the subject of sin.**
 - i. Jesus has the authority to forgive sin. (Mark 2:9-10)
 1. **Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise, take up your bed and walk’? ¹⁰ But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”**
 - ii. Sin causes shame and dysfunction. (Gen 3:1-13)
 1. See notes above.
 - iii. Sin leads to death. (James 1:15)
 1. ¹⁵ **Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.**
 - iv. Sin impacts all people (Rom 5:12)
 1. ¹² **Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.**
- c. **Subtle drift and concessions – The seduction of sin. → The sin they struggled with. (vv.15-15)**
 - i. Balaam connection. → Compromise by letting sin seduce and slowly creep in.
 1. We come now to *a few things* that were wrong. They refer to false teaching, the enemy within. **We cannot identify the error with certainty, but Balaam was the man who, after being prevented from cursing Israel, apparently advised Balak, king of Moab that the Israelites would forfeit God's protection if he could induce them to worship idols (Num. 31:16).**
 2. **The incident at Baal-peor made a deep impression on subsequent generations. It became proverbial for spiritual decline.**

¹¹ Stanley Grenz, David Guretzki, and Cherith Fee Nordling, [*Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms*](#) (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 107.

3. **Two points are singled out, the eating of *food sacrificed to idols* and *sexual immorality*.** It is possible that the former refers to meat that had first been offered to idols and was then sold on the open market, and the latter to sexual sin in general. But it is more likely that both refer to idolatrous practices. Feasting on sacrificial meat and licentious conduct were usual accompaniments of the worship of idols, both in Old and New Testament times.¹²
 - ii. The church in Pergamum slowly gave into the sins of the culture around them, and as it crept into the life of the church it diminished their witness and distinctive aroma.
 1. **We should think of this “creeping in” as more of an “open secret.” → Everyone knew it was wrong, and it shouldn’t happen, but they also knew that it was happening, and so it just became part of their internal culture.**
- d. **Christians only have one godly response to sin, give it no quarter. (v.16)**
 - i. Our goal is not to be “moral” people... our goal is to be like Christ.
 1. We are to make a habit of being like Jesus. → 1 Jn. 2:6
 2. **⁶ whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.**
 - ii. **We “give it no quarter” when we do these two things:**
 1. Repent from sin when it creeps into our lives.
 - a. *Repent* is a sharp command and *therefore* means this should be done because of God’s hatred for this kind of practice. Evil must not be countenanced. *I will come* is another of John’s vivid present tenses. He sees it happening. The alternative to repentance is to have Christ *fight against them*. The verb is confined to Revelation in the New Testament (apart from Jas 4:2). **The sword of my mouth clearly means the words Christ speaks. This saying is either a comfort and a strength, or else it destroys us.**¹³
 - b. **Repentance is not only an act of contrition (i.e., a right and remorseful recognition of your wrongdoing) it is also an act of worship.**
 - c. Why? → Because you are rightly recognizing God in his rightful place in the universe, eternity, and in salvific history. I.e., You are praising him for being God. In this way, God gifts us with repentance to protect us from shame.
 2. **Resist sin in all of its forms (actions, deficiency, dominion).**
 - a. We resist because we have experienced the disappointment of sin and the fulfilment of Jesus.
 - b. This is a reality of our identity in Christ.

3. The reality of Jesus.

- a. **Authority – He has the final word. (v.12, 1:16)**
 - i. The picture of Jesus is important for them and for us to understand the fullness of his message.

¹² Leon Morris, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 20, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 71.

¹³ Leon Morris, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 20, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 71–72.

- ii. **The setting:** The greeting is from him *who has the sharp, double-edged sword* (cf. 1:16), a sword which will be used (v. 6). In a city as devoted to the Romans as Pergamum, and the place of residence of the proconsul who possessed the power to put people to death and whose very symbol may be taken to be a sword (Rom. 13:4), it was a salutary reminder that there is a power greater than that of any earthly governor.¹⁴
- iii. **Christ's sword** (Revelation 1:16) represents his power to judge (Isaiah 11:4; 49:2; Revelation 2:16; 19:15), though its double edge may suggest Christ's words can both judge and save, wound, and heal (Hebrews 4:12-13).
 - 1. The "sharp two-edged sword" proceeding from Jesus' mouth is based on the prophecies of **Isa. 11:4 and 49:2**, which adds further to his depiction as an eschatological judge and as the one beginning to fulfill this messianic expectation.¹⁵
 - 2. Jesus is speaking to them as the one who holds ultimate authority and is the voice that can cut through the clutter of their complacency and
- b. **Compassion – Revelation is a message of hope and a gift of grace.**
 - i. It would be utterly cruel for a compassionate God to ignore or abandon humanity.
 - 1. If God had a solution and the ability to redeem mankind, it would be utterly cruel for him to withhold it.
 - 2. Here in this passage, we may not like the concept of Jesus' authority and ability to judge, but his refusal to engage would be catastrophically cruel.
 - a. → ***The sword of my mouth clearly means the words Christ speaks. This saying is either a comfort and a strength, or else it destroys us.***¹⁶
 - b. In our legal system, we charge and convict people for this action called, criminal neglect.
 - i. I.e., We intuitively know that a non-response can be morally wrong and evil.
 - ii. God is not evil, so he extends a solution to humanity, but doesn't force humanity to accept it.
 - iii. If God was to force humanity to accept his solution, he would be guilty of being a cosmic tyrant.
 - 3. **Revelation is a message of hope because it reminds us that Jesus, the one who is victorious, offers his victory to us.** → That is the message of the gospel.
 - ii. **The action of the gospel.** (cf. Rev. 1:5b-6, 18) - Here we hear of the work of Jesus and that is the message of the gospel.
 - 1. Jesus has freed us from our sin and made us into something that we could not become on our own, that is, a kingdom of priests.
 - 2. **He has made us a kingdom.** The kingdom of God was the main topic in the teaching of Jesus and we find here that it is those who are Christ's who constitute the kingdom. It is not like earthly kingdoms, a realm with known boundaries, population, etc.
 - 3. **It consists of those who have been loosed from their sins through Christ and who now live to do his service.**

¹⁴ Leon Morris, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 20, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 70.

¹⁵ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 211–212.

¹⁶ Leon Morris, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 20, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 71–72.

4. **The order is important.** First comes the reference to his redeeming work and only then that to the kingdom. As a result of what Christ has done for them, believers become other than they were.¹⁷
- iii. Again, God is making himself known and offering something to humanity that they could not have done for themselves. → This is grace.
- c. **Imputed Righteousness – We are not the same any longer. (v.17)**
 - i. In theology *imputation* may be used negatively to refer to the transfer of the sin and guilt of Adam to the rest of humankind. Positively, imputation refers to the righteousness of Christ being transferred to those who believe on him for salvation.¹⁸
 1. In the New Testament, justification is God's declarative act by which, *on the basis of the sufficiency of Christ's atoning death*, he pronounces believers to have fulfilled all of the requirements of the law that pertain to them. Justification is a forensic act imputing the righteousness of Christ to the believer; it is not an actual infusing of holiness into the individual. It is a matter of declaring the person righteous, as a judge does in acquitting the accused. It is not a matter of making the person righteous or altering his or her actual spiritual condition.¹⁹
 - ii. As we see the gospel bear fruit in our lives, we become increasing aware that we are not the same anymore, that is, we truly are a new person.
 1. Cf. 2 Cor. 5:14-17 – **¹⁴For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died;¹⁵ and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.¹⁶ From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer.¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.**
 - iii. The three promises of Jesus – hidden manna, a white stone, a new name
 1. **Hidden manna.** Manna was the food God gave his people in the wilderness. Better than food offered to idols (a symbol of participation in idolatry) is God's feast of manna (a symbol of participation in Jesus). See Isaiah 55:1-2 and John 6:31-35.
 2. **A white stone.** Stones were used as tokens of admission, so this may be a picture of the Christian's right to enter God's kingdom. Stones were also used when juries voted (white for innocent, black for guilty), so this may point to our acquittal on the day of judgment.
 3. **A new name.** The new name is a picture of being owned (maybe even "branded") by God, with all the security that entails (Revelation 14:1; 22:4; see also Isaiah 62:2; 65:15).²⁰
- d. **Don't grow weary in the battle to root out sin. (cf. "conquer")**
 - i. We again see the repetition of the word, "conquer." → It will be repeated to all seven churches.
 1. Don't forget, it is a military word that means to struggle in the process of overcoming the enemy towards ultimate victory.

¹⁷ Leon Morris, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 20, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 54.

¹⁸ Stanley Grenz, David Guretzki, and Cherith Fee Nordling, *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 65.

¹⁹ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 884.

²⁰ Chester, Tim. *Revelation For You: Seeing history from heaven's perspective* (p. 40). The Good Book Company. Kindle Edition.

2. This ultimate victory Jesus reminds them of is in the three promises (hidden mana, white stones, a new name).
- ii. We **remember** what God has done.
 1. Remembering is an active posture – That means it requires intentionality and investment.
 2. We remember the important things. → The things that are crucial to our futures, hopes, and wholeness.
 - a. **We remember when sin did not deliver on its promises.**
 - b. **We remember when God did deliver on his promises.**
- iii. We **recite** what is true.
 1. **We need to be intentional to recite the truth to overcome the lies.**
 - a. The only thing that defeats a lie is the truth.
 - b. Lies are like shifting shadows that cause us to perceive things in ways that they aren't.
 - i. Ever have this happen to you as a kid? A shadow in a dimly lit place caused you great fear?
 - ii. Then, you turned the lights on, and all of a sudden, it wasn't so scary after all? → We have this experience camping with our kids all the time.
 - c. God's Word is absolute and foundational truth. → It defeats every lie that the enemy wants to use to separate us from God's presence.
 - i. Romans 8 - I've heard it said that in this one chapter alone, Paul confronts every lie that humanity buys into.
 2. Remember from the message to the Ephesians - **Unsound doctrine is only a generation or two away.**
 - a. **It is possible that John is addressing a second generation in the Ephesian church that had failed to maintain the witnessing fervor of the first generation.**
- iv. We **recognize** that faithfulness is about doing the next right and Godly thing.
 1. Faithfulness is not an activity of perfection, nor is it to be dismissed as something that does not matter.
 - a. We tend to go to one of these two extremes while the truth is in the middle.
 2. Faithful people are marked so by doing the next right Godly thing. → Don't get overwhelmed and waylaid by worrying about things that are days, weeks, or months ahead of you. → Do the next right Godly thing.

Additional notes:

On “Satan’s throne” - And, as in Smyrna, “Satan” is named as the ultimate instigator of persecution. “The throne of Satan” in Pergamum is a way of referring to that city as a center of Roman government and pagan religion in the Asia Minor region. It was the first city in Asia Minor to build a temple to a Roman ruler (Augustus) and the capital of the whole area for the cult of the emperor. The city proudly referred to itself as the “temple warden” (νεωκόρος) of a temple dedicated to Caesar worship. Life in such a politico-religious center put all the more pressure on the church to pay public homage to Caesar as a deity, refusal of which meant high treason to the state.

Furthermore, Pergamum was also a center of pagan cults of various deities. For example, the cult of Asclepius, the serpent god of healing, was prominent in Pergamum; the serpent symbol of Asclepius also became one of the emblems of the city and may have facilitated John’s reference to “the throne of Satan” (cf. 12:9; 20:2!). Zeus, Athene, Demeter, and Dionysus were also gods receiving significant cultic attention. The reference to “Satan’s throne” may also have been brought to mind because of the conical hill behind Pergamum which was the site of many temples, prominent among which was the throne-like altar of Zeus, which itself would have been sufficient to arouse the thought of the devil’s throne. 13:2 says that Satan gave the “beast” “his throne and great authority” (cf. 16:10); thus Satan works through the ungodly, earthly political power in Pergamum to persecute God’s people (see on 13:1ff.).²¹

On the martyrdom of Antipas - But the opposition had not led to any slackening of Christian zeal, and the exalted Lord can say, *you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me.* The reference to one martyrdom, that of *Antipas*, and the aorist tense in the verb *renounce* point to one definite crisis rather than a continuing persecution. Nothing more is known of Antipas (though legend has it that he was roasted in a brazen bull). But clearly he had remained firm; he was *my faithful witness* (in time this term came to mean ‘martyr’, one who witnessed by his death). The addition *where Satan lives* stresses the significance of the activity of the evil one. Persecution does not take place simply at the behest of wicked people.²²

On the three promises:

1. **Hidden mana** –
2. **White stones** –
 - a. With this is linked *a white stone* inscribed with *a new name*. **This has puzzled commentators for centuries.** At least seven suggestions have been made with some confidence. One arises from legal practice, where a member of a jury who was for acquittal handed in a white stone. A second view sees a reference to reckoning, since white stones were often used in calculations. A third idea is that the white stone is the symbol of a happy day (like our ‘red-letter day’). Along somewhat the same lines is that which sees the stone as an amulet bringing good luck. A more prosaic suggestion is that the white stone represented a ticket to bread and circuses. A sixth suggestion arises from a rabbinic speculation that when the manna fell from heaven it was accompanied by precious stones (note that *manna* has just been mentioned). The seventh view is that the reference is to a stone in the breastplate of the high priest with the name of one of the tribes written on it. A variant sees a reference to the Urim (Exod. 28:30). Some of these may legitimately be criticized on the ground that either the stone is not white or it has no

²¹ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 246.

²² Leon Morris, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 20, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 70–71.

inscription. But none of them carries complete conviction. **We simply do not know what the white stone signified, though clearly it did convey some assurance of blessing.**²³

3. A new name –

- a. In antiquity the name was widely held to sum up what the man stood for. It represented his character. **It stood for the whole man. Here then the new name represents a new character.**²⁴
- b. For people of antiquity, the hidden name was precious. It meant that God had given the overcomer a new character which no-one knew except himself. It was not public property. It was a little secret between him and his God.²⁵
- c. **In the ancient world and the OT, to know someone's name, especially that of God, often meant to enter into an intimate relationship with that person and to share in that person's character or power.** To be given a new name was an indication of a new status. And when God's name was applied to a place in the OT (e.g., the temple), it often indicated that his presence was there. When someone gave a name to another person or thing it meant that they possessed that person or thing.²⁶

²³ Leon Morris, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 20, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 72.

²⁴ Leon Morris, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 20, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 73.

²⁵ Leon Morris, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 20, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 73.

²⁶ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 254.