

The Compromised Church

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[0 : 00] So take out your Bibles with me, please, and turn to the book of Revelation. You'll find it at the very end. Book of Revelation, the second chapter.

We come this morning to the third church that Jesus speaks to. This book of Revelation opens with a vision that is very symbolic, showing us what Jesus is like.

Not what He looks like, but what He is like. And then He commissions John the Apostle to write to seven churches. This whole message of the Revelation.

But He begins with specific messages to each of the seven churches. Seven, remember, representing fullness. So these are not the only churches that were out there.

They are representative of all churches at that time and representative of all churches throughout history, including today. Today, you'll find that the issues in each church are different from one another and yet still relevant today.

[1 : 10] There are still churches like these that need to hear what Christ said then. So I want to read first the text, Revelation chapter 2. We're going to read from verse 12 to 17.

And if you're able, please stand as I read from this book that Jesus speaks. Revelation 2 verse 12. And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write. The words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword. I know where you dwell.

Where Satan's throne is. Yet you hold fast my name. And you did not deny my faith.

Even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness who was killed among you. Where Satan dwells. But I have a few things against you.

[2 : 11] You have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam. Who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel.

So that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality. So also you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

Therefore, repent. And if not, I am coming to you soon. And I will war against them with the sword of my mouth.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who overcomes, who conquers, I will give some of the hidden manna.

And I will give him a white stone with a new name written on the stone. That no one knows except the one who receives it.

[3 : 09] So reads the word to us today. Let us pray that the Lord teaches us. Father, we ask you, as always, that you would send your spirit through this teaching.

That, Father, he would speak to us. Help us to hear what you want us to hear. Help us not just to hear it, but to receive it.

Give us teachable hearts. Lord, that if there is something we need to repent of, that we would be spurred to do so.

Lord, comfort us. Confront us. Correct us. Grant us, Lord, to hear from you. That you might be honored.

We pray in Christ's name. Amen. Please be seated. I want to read my introduction from, I'm going to borrow from, Dennis Johnson in his book, Triumph of the Lamb, his commentary in the book of Revelation.

[4 : 24] One of the readable commentaries on the book of Revelation. Dennis Johnson is, or what, I'm not sure if he still is, is a professor at Westminster Theological Seminary in California.

Not the Westminster out east, the Westminster out west. He writes this about West Coast churches. West Coast churches face a variety of challenges.

Their environment is anything but friendly to vibrant Christian faith. Some churches, located in self-sufficient, affluent communities, are tempted to pursue personal peace and a comfortable lifestyle, relying on their financial resources for security.

Other churches are stained by scandal of sexual immorality. Some are stigmatized by their community as aloof and intolerant of other viewpoints.

After all, the populists and politicians of the west coast, finding it expedient to cultivate the favor of power brokers in the distant capital, show their loyalty to the system through a civil religion unencumbered by personal convictions.

[5 : 43] Some churches are experts in doctrinal precision, but amid the theological wars, they have lost the capacity to draw the line that defines, excuse me, lost the capacity to care for hurting people.

Others are unclear about where to draw the line that defines the essentials of the gospel as they adapt their message to the culture in order to reach out to or fit in with non-Christians.

Some churches are all image and no reality, lacking spiritual vitality, despite an impressive array of activities. Others are a tiny minority struggling to hold on in the midst of a community that ignores or despises it.

These west coast churches sound stereotypically, I hope I'm reading that right, 21st century Californian.

Don't they? In fact, however, this is a sketch of the situation, strengths, and weaknesses of the west coast churches in Asia Minor in the first century.

[7 : 02] To which Jesus addressed His revelation through John. Laodicea, we'll see later in chapter 3, was in an affluent community, and Christians there were tempted to pursue personal peace, comfortable lifestyle, relying on the financial resources.

Churches in Pergamum, which we're looking at today, and Thyatira, were stained by the scandal of sexual immorality. The church at Smyrna, we looked at last week, apparently was stigmatized by outsiders.

The cities of Asia Minor competed eagerly for the honor of being temple warden by building shrines to the glory of emperors. In Asia Minor, geographically, this is a strategically located crossroads between east and west.

And so, Roman political pragmatism exploited this location in the civil religion of the imperial cult.

The Ephesian church was full of experts in doctrinal precision. For which Jesus praised them. But, in the theological wars that they had fought, they lost the capacity to love imperfect people.

[8 : 24] The churches in Pergamum and Thyatira were unclear about where to draw the line that defines the essentials of the gospel as they tried, by any and all means, to connect with the non-Christians, maintain standing with powerful trade guilds, and fit in with their culture.

The church in Sardis was all image and no substance, lacking spiritual life, despite an impressive array of activities. The Philadelphia church was a tiny minority struggling to hold on in the midst of a community that despised them.

seven churches. Seven churches. Different in so many ways from one another. Seven churches, similar in so many ways to the churches in which we live and serve Jesus.

What one thing do all these churches need to fortify them against the enemy's frontal assaults, to make them savvy to the subtle stratagems, and to make them loyal to God and compassion toward oppressors, they need to hear Jesus' voice.

His voice comforts our weak and wounded hearts, diagnoses our diseases, shatters our dreams of ease here and now, and calls us forward to the consummation of His victory in the New Jerusalem.

[10 : 01] His voice addresses us today in His letters to the seven churches. For each letter is what the Spirit says to all the churches.

Seven churches, all different, and yet seven churches we find very similar to churches today. We looked at Ephesus, the loveless church, doctrinally sound and pure, yet had forsaken its first love, had forgotten, focusing on just truth, forgotten about the love aspect, the priority to love others.

We looked at Smyrna last week, the suffering church, poor, yet Jesus says, you are rich. And they were a church under satanic attack, as it said, they're there, where in the synagogue of Satan and the devil taking them, arresting them, and sending them to prison.

They were being tested, Jesus told them, they're being tested. And they were called to be faithful unto death. So, now we come to the third church, under Jesus' diagnosis, the church of Pergamum.

It's a hard place to witness. You think it's something that the last church was there being attacked by the synagogue of Satan?

[11 : 36] Well, this church dwells in Satan's throne. That's right. They are not part of Satan's throne.

They live in a town that Jesus says is the throne of Satan. They live in a church where Satan has a stronghold.

Now remember, this book of Revelation is Jesus unveiling what we don't tend to see. We see physical. We see earthly. We see church and temples and all that.

They might not mean anything to us. Jesus is saying behind that, behind that is Satan. Alive and one.

Here, a throne. Interesting. Pergamum considered themselves the temple warden. They were honored to take care of the temples.

[12 : 37] Pergamum means a citadel and if you saw Pergamum, you can look it up on the internet and just do Pergamum and it'll show you pictures. It's actually a hill. It's actually like our hills, although not as steep, but actually higher than the hills behind us right here.

We're at 7,300, right? And Chautauqua goes up to 8,000. So that's a 700 foot rise. We'll add about 400 more feet to that and you have Pergamum.

Built on this mountain and below. But on top of the mountain is the Acropolis where the temples are. The high places.

Remember the Old Testament always talked about the high places? That's where the temples were built. That's where a lot of false worship happened. Even Jerusalem was built on a hill.

We would, from Colorado, wouldn't call it a real mountain. But it was a hill. It's a higher place. Not the highest in Israel. But here in Pergamum, they had all kinds of temples.

[13 : 44] They had a God for every need. If you needed healing, you went to Pergamum to the God Asclepius, which is the God of medicine.

The God for healing. Symbolized by a serpent, which is still on the medical symbol today. Started there.

Up high up on the Acropolis was a temple to Athena, the God of wisdom. Need wisdom? Go to Athena. By the way, they were interested in wisdom there.

They also had a library that boasted 200,000 volumes. First century. That's quite a library for first century.

They had a temple of Dionysus. Dionysus. Whatever her name is. Or his name is. I'm not even sure. If you wanted to party, this is where you went.

[14 : 50] This is the God of drinking and orgies. At the very top of the Acropolis, right on the top of the place of honor, the place that you saw if you walked to Capernaum, is this throne-like altar to Zeus.

It was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world that is replicated in a museum, in which I forget where that is in the east coast.

Huge. Throne-like. Maybe that's what Jesus is referring to when he says Satan's throne. Maybe he's referring to the serpent symbol of Asclepius.

Maybe both. Maybe all. So that many, many deities there, of course they have their temple to the emperor, the Tragerian, the temple-honoring emperor Tragerian.

They worship the emperor there. So Jesus calls this place Satan's throne. Where he holds dominion. Where he is strategically yet limited in his power.

[16 : 09] Compared to God, he's limited. But remember, Scripture, the New Testament, calls Satan the God of this world. He has control. He is subtle.

He is behind the scenes. We are no primitive culture, so we don't kind of go for that stuff. So he is much more subtle in our communities.

Much more bold than other communities. But he is a powerful influence over governments and rulers who follow him.

We'll find that in this book. This book is going to talk about a beast. A beast that turns out to be empires and kings and kingdoms through time.

Where Satan has given his throne and his authority to this beast. This seven-headed beast. Right?

[17 : 09] Not seven-headed all at once. Seven-headed historically. Where you have five heads have already passed. One is and there's one to come. We'll find that as we get to chapter 13 of

Revelation.

But they're empires. They're governments that the enemy is working through. Jesus is unveiling that. This is the revelation.

Not all is as it seems. There is deception going on and there is a power behind these things that are happening in our culture.

So here's a church that is commended and confronted. So they're commended for their loyalty, even though they live in Satan's throne.

They have been faithful. They have been steadfast. So in terms of external pressures, commendable. That's not where their problem is.

[18 : 11] Amazing. Right? Such a pressure place. They're standing firm externally. The problem is internal. They've ignored the threat that's inside the church.

Compromise. So here's the message Jesus gives. Two messages. One of commendation to their witness that is faithful and then secondly he gives in verses 14 to 17 a confrontation to repent of the compromise that is within their church.

So let's look at the commendation first. What does he have good to say about them? Well, he commends them for their persevering their enduring witness amid external persecution.

Very commendable. Very amazing. Right? They're standing fast. So verse 12, Jesus first reminds them who is speaking to them.

And remember at the beginning of each of these letters to each of the seven churches, he brings out one of the highlights from the vision from chapter one. And one of those highlights in the vision of chapter one was that he saw this son of man that had the blazing eyes, right?

[19 : 27] And the white hair and the burnished bronze feet and all of this face shining like the sun. But he also had a sword coming out of his mouth.

A sharp two-edged sword. Scary. And this again is not what Jesus looks like, but what he is white. Sharp to it. And so this is the feature that Jesus brings up to this church. To this church. To this church, you need to hear, remember that picture of the vision, my sword, because that's going to be relevant to you.

This is a message that comes from one with a weapon. Why emphasize that? His word, his message to them is coming as a sword.

It is the sword of truth. Because they have muddled the truth. They are not speaking the full truth. It is a sharp two-edged sword.

[20 : 38] It's two-edged, so on one side it can slay the nations. Chapter 19, Christ comes back and he slays the nations at the very end with the sword of his mouth.

which doesn't mean he really takes out a sword and he slays him. It's his word. His word is that power. The word of God is like a sword, right? Hebrews 4. 12.

Which is, not only can slay, but can heal by cutting and dividing. Right? So the word of God can act upon us by reaching what no one else can reach.

It can reach deep inside of us. Right? So the word of God is like a sword that cuts and pierces and divides spirit and soul.

How do you divide spirit and soul? And then thoughts and intentions of the heart. So the word can cut us deep and get into what we're thinking about and what our intentions are.

[21 : 40] It doesn't just look at our extra, it gets to the real point. Right? So Jesus says this sword is coming to you. I'm coming at your thoughts and intentions.

So where do they live? As we said, they live in a satanic stronghold. It's Satan's throne. The word throne is used a whole lot in the book of Revelation. I actually counted it 47 times.

And only three of those 47 times apply to Satan. So here we have Satan's throne. Chapter 13. Satan gives to the beast his throne and authority.

Right? So to the government of the time, he gives his throne and authority to the ruling world empire of the time. So the rest of the time throne is either well mostly he's referring to God's throne and sometimes to the thrones that the church sits on.

The 24 elders also sit on thrones. But when they see the throne they get off their thrones and cast their crowns. Right? And give him the honor.

[22 : 53] He's the true power. So throne. Seat of control. So Satan's throne. So in other words he has control there. He has sovereignty there.

He has authority. He has rule. This is his power base. It doesn't mean it's the only place he works because we already know he's working in Smyrna and he's going to be working in the next church we see and then the church after that.

So but this is where his power base is. He works through the local or national government and rulers.

So notice this commendation there in verse 13. he says I know where you dwell. That's not a threat. That's actually a comfort.

I know. I know where you live. I know it's hard. I know it's an intimidating place. This is where you are. This is where you live.

[23 : 54] This is where you worship me. This is where you witness. And let me commend you. Though you live in the shadow of Satan's throne you hold fast my name.

You are keeping a grip on my name. You are standing for my reputation. My name just means what represents me.

What identifies me. And you identify with me. And you have not denied my faith. Or more literally you have not denied your faith in me.

me. That you trust me. That you follow me. You have not disowned me. You have not renounced me. Remember at this time there is pressure.

And in fact we're even told one of their own at earlier time was killed because he confessed Christ and would not renounce Christ. This fellow he calls Antipas my faithful witness.

[24 : 59] The word witness is martyrio. We get our word martyr from that. So he turned out to be a witness to death. Remember during these times if you did not confess the emperor of the time as a god not the only god because the Romans believed in all kinds of gods Caesar was one of them.

And the Caesar of that time Domitian grabbed on that. I am a god. I am divine. And that's why they built temples to his honor and that kind of thing.

And if you wanted to practice in the trade guilds you needed to sign up for that. You needed to go to the festivals. You needed to participate in the public celebrations of Caesar as well as the other gods.

They had lots of parties going on. Lots of celebrations to honor these various gods. And so if you didn't participate in that that's going to hurt your bank book.

You're not going to be part of the trade guild. You're not going to have the nice place in the marketplace. How are you going to make a living? That's why Sardis or excuse me Smyrna the church we just looked at was so poor.

[26 : 22] They're suffering for their faith. They're not compromising. so they're faithful in this way. Even unto death. Jesus had warned us about tribulation and martyrdom in witnessing for him.

In Matthew 24 Jesus warned his disciples. He said they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death. And you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake because you stand for me.

And many will fall away and betray one another because not everybody wants to be put to death. I like Jesus but I'm not going to die for him. Right? So many will fall away and betray one another, hate one another.

And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. That's just going to happen. That's part of history. And because lawlessness will be increased, in other words, hey, let's not keep the rules anymore, the love of many will grow cold.

But the one who endures to the end, Jesus said, will be saved. the one who perseveres, the one who stands, the one who keeps believing, keeps trusting me, keeps depending on me, that's the saved person.

[27 : 36] They're not perfect, but they keep trusting me. And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

Jesus kind of gives a summary of, here's the rest of history, until the end. Persecution and gospel keeps going out. Because that's why God hasn't ended it all yet, because the gospel has to keep going out.

And God's got people in nations and languages and communities all over the world that he is planning to reach with the gods.

By the way, I think I've said this before, the places we've sent missionaries to are now sending missionaries back to us. Yeah. Because we need, you know.

So here's an enduring church. They're persevering in their witness amid the external pressure, standing faithful in Satan's stronghold. How are you doing with that?

[28 : 42] How's your witness? something to think about, isn't it? I mean, what if Jesus said to the church in Palmer Lake, I know where you dwell.

What if he revealed that that was a place where Satan also has a foothold? And I know historically he has had a foothold. Ask me about that later.

So, how are we doing? Are we standing firm? Which means depending on Jesus, right?

It's not about getting stronger. Not about going, not about that. And we know that because here's a church that's in a satanic stronghold, right?

What does Jesus tell them to do? Do they need to go out and fight that? Do they need to do prayer marches around the city? Do they need to retake the city for Christ?

[29 : 54] Interesting, Jesus is very silent about all those kind of things. He says, no, your work isn't outside. You're doing fine. You're holding. You're holding. The problem is inside.

So now we come to the second message. Problem's not out. You're doing fine. You're doing good. You're being faithful. You're standing for my name. You're confessing me. You're doing the right things.

Even in that intimidating environment. What do you need to focus on? So here he says in verse 14, I have a few things against you. What would that be like to hear Jesus say that?

I know he has something. And by the way, you want to know what that is? Not about me. I'm not going to tell you what I think. If you want to know, remember Psalm says, I cry to God, search me and try me, see if there will be any hurtful way.

He will let you know. If you pray that genuinely, he will let you know. Very genuinely. He'll bring to mind, oh yeah, I need to go apologize to that person.

[31 : 05] I need to stop healing. I remember very profoundly the first time I did that. I was like, one, two, three, whoa. One, two, three, wow, three things, huh?

He had a few things. Well, he has a few things here for this church. He says, I have a few things against you. You have some there, not the whole church, but you have some in the church who hold to the teaching of Balaam who taught Balak.

We're talking Old Testament Numbers, chapters 23-25. Okay, if you want to see the history, I'm not going to go into all that. Some who hold to the teaching, Balaam is used as a symbol of the kind of teaching going on, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality.

So in other words, there's a false teaching going on in the church like that that was done so long ago by Balaam. Some are holding to so he identifies their compromise.

Some in your church are holding to this false teaching. Balaam is the Hebrew or Aramaic word for the false prophet of the day.

[32 : 20] He was not a prophet to Israel. He was a false prophet. He was a prophet for hire. Back then, you could hire a prophet to bless your crops or bless your and at the time, the king of Moab, the enemy of Israel, wanted to hire a prophet to bless Moab and curse Israel.

And so he hired Balaam to come and do that and Balaam went to go do that and instead of saying curse Israel, he said bless Israel because God would not let him curse Israel.

Three times he tried and he could not do it. Couldn't do it. And then you read in Numbers chapter 25 that the Moabite women came and seduced the Israelite men to sacrifice to their idols and commit immorality.

So it's like where's Balaam in all that? Balaam failed because you read the account, Balaam didn't do it. Then you read later chapter 31 of Numbers says, by the way, the reason that the Moabite women knew how to do that is because Balaam advised them how to do that.

Okay, God won't let me curse them, but you could go in the back door, just send the women, you know, you know, send the women. Because the Israelite men, no chance, you get them out.

[33 : 50] So that's the situation that's happening. Teach them to seduce them, that it's okay to join in idolatry and immorality.

So in other words, in this church in the first century, it wasn't Balaam, it was just the kind of teaching like Balaam did that seduced people, that tricked them into a stumbling block, he says.

How does he say it? Who taught Balaam to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel. The stumbling block was the Moabite women seducing the men. That was the stumbling block.

They saw the women, they go, whatever, I don't know what they did, but they did. So now he's saying some are in the church doing the same kind of thing.

They're seducing them, they're luring them into a stumbling block, the stumbling block being food sacrifice to idols and immorality.

[34 : 51] Somehow they're teaching people within the church that it's okay. It's okay to eat at the festival of the god for Caesar, the god of whatever.

That way you can keep your place in the marketplace. Because it doesn't mean anything. If you go and do that, remember Paul said these so-called gods are not gods.

It's meaningless, right? 1 Corinthians chapter 8, stumbling blocks. Paul says I can go and eat that food and not have any problem with it. Because they have no power.

But then he also said, but you may have some in your congregation who have come out of that. And if they eat the food sacrificed to the idol, they're going to have all kinds of problems.

So for the sake of your brother, don't eat any of that meat. That's what Paul's conclusion. At the end of 1 Corinthians 8, he says, hey, if food causes my brother to stumble, if it causes him to go back into that, even though it's okay for me, it's not okay for him, so it's not okay for me.

[36 : 05] I sacrifice my freedom. So, in other words, in this church, there may have been people speaking of freedom. But what is overlooking, see, Paul made a difference.

Paul didn't say you eat at those idol feasts. He said if you buy meat that was sacrificed to an idol, you're going to the market, you're just buying meat.

And he said, don't ask where it came from. Don't ask. If you ask, then you find out, then you gotta make it, okay, do I do this or that?

If you don't know, it has no power in and of itself, so don't ask. But, if a brother, a weaker brother who came out of that, or they're just weak, and they don't know how to stand yet, and they see you buying that, and they're thinking, oh, see, that whole thing, it doesn't matter, I can just go and do that.

And then they get caught up, and Paul says you're actually sharing in demons. There is something there. But if you're a Christian, greater seed that is in me, have I confused you yet?

[37 : 21] Does that make some sense? So, it's different when Paul says in 1 Corinthians 8, you're buying it without asking, than actually going to the festival and eating the meat sacrificed to the idols and performing the other acts that go along with that worship.

You've compromised. So, Jude talks about this. This is actually a church that's opposite of Ephesus. Ephesus kind of had it all right on the inside.

They had all the doctrine right and kept everybody in line. So, this is a church the opposite of Ephesus. They're not fighting for truth at all. They're an undiscerning church.

I don't think they're doing it on purpose. I think maybe they just don't know. Maybe they have a right motive in terms of we want to reach the sinners. We want to reach out.

But we don't know where to draw the line with you know where our gospel stops and ends and where we're being gracious. So, Jude speaks of this.

[38 : 30] He says, Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith.

To fight for the faith. The faith. That set of truth that we believe that was once for all delivered to the saints. Why do I need to do that to tell you to fight for the truth?

Because certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were destined for this condemnation. Ungodly people who watch this who pervert the grace of God into sensuality and deny our only master and Lord Jesus Christ.

So they take Jesus. Jesus is gracious. He says, I come, I die for you. This is grace. I don't deserve that, but I die. We don't deserve that, but I die for you.

This is a gift. Yes, Jesus loves sinners. He dies for sinners. He welcomes sinners. Because that's all of us.

[39 : 39] grace. And we're taking that grace, see, He's forgiven us, and saying, oh, it doesn't matter if I sin, because He forgives.

Right? Right? It doesn't matter. We don't earn our salvation by obedience, right? Am I right? Yes. We're saved by grace alone, through faith. It's not our works. So what does it matter? Can't I just sin?

Because God will forgive me, right? Won't He? No? Yeah? Do I have to work for His forgiveness? So, okay, I'm playing.

But I want you to enter into this. I want you to see what's wrong. See, we have churches today that say it doesn't matter. And their good motive is to reach sinners.

[40 : 41] Okay? I'm all for that. Yeah, let's reach sinners. Sinners are just like us. That's us. The only difference is we know we're sinners and we're working, you know?

So the difference is if you come to Christ and you receive that forgiveness and you're just believing and you accept that, now how I live does matter.

Because if I don't care how I live, then I tell him it doesn't matter what you did. I mock him. I mock him. Jesus says, right?

Follow me, abide in me, right? There are lines in terms of how I live. I don't do it because I have to. I do it because I want to.

I want to please him. I want to honor him. I love him so I want to obey him. Before I was saved, by the way, I didn't want to. But once he saved me, yeah, I don't want to shame him.

[42 : 01] I don't want to dishonor him. I don't want to displease him. That's why. Okay? And so churches that say it doesn't matter, here's what Jesus says to them.

It matters. My word matters. I'm not calling you to draw that line to be better than anybody else. I'm calling you to draw that line because it's what's right. It's what I've made you to be. And it's what you will find joy in.

You cross that line, you look for joy, you look for escape, you look for whatever you're looking for when you cross those lines. Right? And what do you find? momentary joy?

Usually despair and misery? Right? 2 Peter says the same kind of thing. 2 Peter 3, false prophets will also arise among the people, just as there will be false teachers from among you.

[43 : 10] true. So notice these apostles are teaching the church that it's not just that false teachers come and sneak in, sometimes that's how they come in, but sometimes it's the false prophets that come from within, the dangers from within.

They haven't been taught or they haven't been confronted, they don't know what the gospel truth is. And so they kind of mix culture and they mix Bible and say, okay, I think it looks like this.

So he says, some arise among you who secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the master who bought them.

So these are Christians doing this, bringing upon themselves swift destruction, in other words, the Lord's going to take them out for doing that, and many will follow their, again, it's sensuality.

And because of them, the way of truth is malign. Truth is, well, it's my truth. We hear that a lot today, by the way, don't we? Well, my truth is this. What's that?

[44 : 20] If you're just talking about that's my perspective, that's how I understand it, okay, that's one thing. But if you're saying, well, that's the Bible's truth, but mine's over here. I don't believe in that kind of God.

And then you're just fooling yourself. The way of truth is blaspheme. The real truth is blaspheme. The real truth is distorted.

So, Jesus gives them a correction. Verse 16, what is this church to do? Therefore, repent.

One thing, repent. Repent. By the way, if not, I am coming. When does Christ come?

Is He just come at the end? Well, for this church, He's coming pretty soon, pretty quickly, while they're still living. It's not the final coming, but it is a coming of Jesus.

[45 : 23] I am coming to you soon. If you don't correct this, I am coming soon, and I will war against them, not you.

I will war against them. I will war against the compromisers. Wow. I don't know what that means. I don't know what that means.

Maybe it means like 1 Corinthians 11, where people were not coming to the communion table in a worthy manner. They were treating it like a common thing. And Paul says that's why some of you are asleep.

In other words, you're absent from the body prison. He took you home. Or that's why some of you are sick. So sometimes God disciplines that way, to wake you up.

Or if you're not going to wake up, to take you home. So maybe that's what he means, I'll come and war against them, I'm going to take them home. Because these are Christians, I think, that are just compromised.

[46 : 26] Or I'm going to war against them. So what does that mean? So it's like, well, oh, then it's not a threat to us as a church, right? He's going to come and war against the compromisers. We don't care about them, right?

Right? Yeah, but what if we do? What if we do?

What if we love them? I don't want Jesus to come take them out. I'm going to go. So what does repent mean here?

It means do what you weren't doing. Turn around and do what you weren't doing. Go confront them. Go face them. Go tell them. Jesus said if your brother sins, what do you do?

Go privately and show him his fault. How are you going to show him his fault? By your opinion? No, your opinion doesn't matter.

[47 : 23] No, you're going to show him his fault. Jesus says this, what do you think? you're doing this and here's what Jesus says, what do you think? That's a show.

No matter what I think. And of course, if your brother doesn't listen, you bring a couple of witnesses who are not there to gang up, who are there to make sure you're being honest and make sure they're being honest.

Right? That's what you do. The brothers say you're going to win them, not to win an argument, you're going to get them back, to rescue them from this error. So that's what they're doing.

If not, I'm coming. And then finally, a confirmation Jesus gives in verse 17. To the conquerors, He gives a confirmation.

Whoever has ears, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. So even though He's speaking to this church, it relates to all churches. To the one who conquers, I'm going to give two things.

[48 : 28] I'm going to give him some of the hidden manna, whatever that is, and I'll give him a white stone with a new name written on it that no one knows except the one who receives it.

So you get a secret name. It's just me and Jesus. It's kind of cool. I just want to confirm you. So He says hidden manna.

What's manna? Nana? Manu, manu. manna. What is it? What is it? That's what manna means.

What is it? That stuff that came from heaven, right?

In the wilderness, He fed them with manna. They called it, what is it? What is it? And they made all kinds of angel food cake and whatever with it. So it was God's sustainment, God's gift, bread from heaven.

manna. I think maybe what this means, I don't know. I'm going to give you the hidden manna because we're not going back Old Testament. What's the hidden manna in the future? Well, I think it's dining with Jesus.

[49 : 33] The last letter is written to Laodicea and he says if you repent, I stand at the door and knock, right? If you open the door, I will come in and dine with you.

I'm going to restore felish. I think it's that. I think it's not about eating at the temple feasts. It's not about that sacrifice meat. It's about eating with me.

Whatever hidden man he is. There is a future feast, right? And then he talks about a white stone.

That could mean a lot of things. Back in those days, they used white and black stones if they were judging something, right?

So if they thought someone was guilty, they'd throw the black stone in. If they thought somebody was innocent, they would with a white stone. So it could be about verdict of innocence. And also the stone was also a way of admittance to one of the feasts.

It was your ticket. And so maybe it's Jesus' way of saying, I'll give you the white stone with your name on it, and you come to my feast. You know, what do these things mean?

[50 : 43] new name, that's certainly a new identity. In Revelation 22, it says that all the saved have God's name written on their forehead. So the new name, maybe it's...

And Revelation 19 talks about Jesus coming back, right? And he has a name. He has several names, but one of the names nobody knows. And we get a name like that that nobody knows.

So we're like Jesus. So how does this apply? So can I meddle for just a minute? Are you holding fast to Christ's name?

Not denying your faith in Him? Witness when you have the opportunity to witness. Do you know the truth of the gospel? Do you know it well enough to recognize false?

Something that's off? Or do you compromise with the truth? Are you willing to sacrifice truth to win somebody?

[51 : 47] I mean, your motive might be to win somebody, but are you willing to sacrifice truth to do that? What is the Spirit saying to you? That's all that matters, not what I say, but what the Spirit says.

Is He calling you to repent? Is He calling you to change? Is He calling you to turn from your silence? Is He calling you to turn from your conformity to the world? Finally, do you value God's Word? Do you take it seriously? Does what this says matter? To you? It is a sword. So in other words, are you teachable?

Do you invite Christ to not just comfort you, but correct you? Do you trust Him to do that? He who has an ear, let him hear.

The Spirit says to the churches. Let's pray. Father, we thank You for Your Word. We thank You, O Lord, for the way You unveil what's actually going on today, what we're not aware of by what we see outwardly.

[53 : 00] So thank You, Lord. Once we're aware, then we are better on our guard. And help us, O Father, to keep our armor on, the armor that You give us.

Help us, Lord, to trust You, to talk to You, to hear from You. And Father, if there's something we must do, if there's a confrontation we need to have, a gentle one to show the truth to a brother or sister, grant us the courage to do so.

And grant us, Lord, Your words to do so. Help us, O Father, to be a church that is steadfast, that is a persevering witness.

but grant us, Father, to balance that with truth as well. Help us to recognize when we need to stand for truth. We pray in Christ's name.

Amen.