

Seven Churches 2020 Pt. 3

Pastor James Foley – Shared Sunday, August 30, 2020

COMMUNION

FYI – It has been some time since we have practiced the ORDINANCE of Christ known as COMMUNION. Though we have worked diligently to regard the CROSS of Christ, the COST of our Salvation and the COMMITMENT these things should engender, there is NO substitute for Holy Communion. Let us consider that...

- Communion provides us a time to consider a common **NEED**
- Communion provides us a time to consider a common **SAVIOR**
- Communion provides us a time to consider a common **LORD**
- Communion provides us a time to consider a common **HOPE**

KEY – In a world marred with division and strife Communion reminds us of a UNIFYING agent!

- Let us remember the BROKEN BODY of Christ (i.e., symbolized with a wafer of bread).
- Let us remember the SHED BLOOD of Christ (i.e., symbolized with the fruit of the vine).

1 Corinthians 11:23–26 (NIV)

23 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.” 25 In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.” 26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

INTRODUCTION PT. 1

Thank you for joining us today. Whether you are here IN PERSON or watching via the LIVESTREAM, you are most WELCOME. Please have a Bible at the ready and be prepared to take some notes. Let us turn to the Book of Revelation (i.e., Revelation 2).

SETTING THE STAGE PT. 1

In the opening pages of the Book of Revelation, the Risen Christ PRESENTS Himself to the aged apostle John as One who had come to JUDGE and/or ASSESS His people. Decades after His Death, Resurrection and Ascension, the Lord commissioned John to record specific messages for the CHURCHES located at Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea...

FYI – It is the PURPOSE of this series to analyze these timely messages (determining their timeless application).

NOTE – Last Sunday we considered the words of Christ to the churches at EPHESUS and SMYRNA. If you missed this teaching feel free to listen to the previous message ONLINE! This morning it is my intention to cover the words of Christ to the churches at PERGAMUM and THYATIRA...

PERGAMUM (TO THE WORD)

Revelation 2:12–17

12 “To the angel of the church in Pergamum write:

These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword. 13 I know where you live—where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, not even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city—where Satan lives.

14 Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: There are some among you who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin so that they ate food sacrificed to idols and committed sexual immorality. 15 Likewise, you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. 16 Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

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

PERGAMUM (INITIAL ADDRESS)

FYI – This particular message of Christ was directed to the church at PERGAMUM...

Q. What do we know about ancient Pergamum?

A1. Pergamum (also known as Pergamos) was situated app. 50-miles north of Smyrna and 15-miles from the Aegean Sea. It was the official CAPITAL of the Roman province of Asia, even though Ephesus and Smyrna were more important commercially.

A2. It was a place of incredible WEALTH and CULTURE, known for its immense library which held over 200k volumes. It was also known for the Imperial CULT and the worship of the Emperor. Because of this—and the many cults that worshipped a variety of pagan gods—it is no wonder that Christ calls Pergamum the place where SATAN has his throne and lives (v. 13)!

PERGAMUM (SELF-DESCRIPTION)

Q. How did Christ reveal Himself in this portion of Scripture?

Revelation 2:12

12 . . . These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword.

NOTE 1 – The sword is a symbolic representation of the Word of God and its TWO-FOLD ability to separate believers from the world and to condemn the world for its sin. It was the sword of salvation AND the sword of judgment!

NOTE 2 – Once again, Christ presents Himself as One having TOTAL authority—i.e., the authority to DETERMINE those who are His and the One to EXECUTE sovereign judgment. It is a powerful thing to behold the Word of God (CHRIST) wielding the Word of God (SCRIPTURE)!

PERGAMUM (COMMENDATION)

FYI – Christ did have a word of COMMENDATION (i.e., encouraging and celebratory praise)...

Revelation 2:13

13 I know where you live—where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, not even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city—where Satan lives.

NOTE 1 – Though this was enemy-occupied territory, the Lord still maintained FULL awareness of His people (v. 13). He knew their geographical location, cultural context and spiritual location—and He knew that they had remained FAITHFUL to Him in the midst of brutal adversity! Though they faced danger and difficulty—up to death (e.g., a figure named Antipas)—they would NOT renounce Christ.

NOTE 2 – I admire much about these people—a people who would NOT renounce faith despite opposition!

PERGAMUM (REBUKE)

FYI – However, unlike the church at Smyrna of last Sunday, Christ has MUCH to say concerning areas where they had STRAYED. Though they had remained true to God under severe testing, they had gone ASTRAY in critical areas—areas which demanded discipline and attention...

Revelation 2:14–15

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

Q. What are the issues herein? They are two-fold...

A1. Apparently, the church at Pergamum had taken to the teaching of the NICOLAITANS (v. 15) (i.e., a group that appeared last Sunday as well). History reveals the Nicolaitans to be a heretical sect who turned the grace of God into a LICENSE to sin (i.e., “Since God loves us and is forgiving, we can sin however we want!). This stands opposed to clear biblical teaching...

Jude 3–4

3 Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt compelled to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to God’s holy people. 4 For certain individuals whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.

2 Corinthians 6:14–18

14 Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? 15 What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? 16 What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said:

“I will live with them
and walk among them,
and I will be their God,
and they will be my people.”

17 Therefore,
“Come out from them
and be separate,
says the Lord.
Touch no unclean thing,
and I will receive you.”

18 And,
“I will be a Father to you,
and you will be my sons and daughters,
says the Lord Almighty.

A2. The church had ALSO taken to the ways of BALAAM (v. 14). Balaam is an OT character who appears primarily in the Book of Numbers (Numbers 22–24, 25:1–9; 31:16; cf. 2 Pet. 2:15; Jude 11). He was a wicked (though NOT false) prophet who helped an enemy of Israel lead the people of God astray through idol worship, sexual immorality and marriage with heathen women (cf. Numbers 31:16)...

A3. Apparently, the believers at Pergamum were SIMILARLY corrupted, seduced by sexual promiscuity, pagan worship, and marrying those not of the faith. This led to a COMPROMISED lifestyle and witness. Ultimately, the distinction between lost and found—saint and sinner—were being BLENDED. Rather than influencing the culture, they were being INFLUENCED by the culture!

Q. To what degree does this sound familiar with Century-21?

Q. To what degree are we changing the world or being changed by it?

Q. What was the word of Christ then and what is it now (i.e., to His people)?

PERGAMUM (REMEDY)

Revelation 2:16

16 Repent therefore!

FYI – This is a word that the Church of Jesus Christ better REDISCOVER—and that right quickly!

PERGAMUM (PROMISE)

Q. What was the penalty should the church fail to comply?

Revelation 2:16

16 Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

KEY – Christ HIMSELF would contend with them, judging them by the piercing sword of His mouth. Could anything be more than having Christ as your ADVERSARY? Could anything be more FRIGHTENING than to hear the following words from Him: “Depart from me, I never knew you” (cf. Matt. 7:23)?

Q. What was the reward for proper repentance?

Revelation 2:17

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

A1. They would receive hidden manna. MANNA in the OT was the food that God supernaturally supplied to the Hebrews in the midst of their journey from Egypt to the Promised Land (cf. Exodus and Numbers). It was the source of sustenance and strength. In the NT, Christ declares that HE is the manna from heaven (cf. John 6)—i.e., that supernatural source of spiritual strength and nourishment...

KEY – Thus, those who repented would be rewarded by Him WITH Him (i.e., HE was their reward)!

A2. Moreover, they would receive a WHITE STONE with a name written on it—i.e., a name which no one knows save him who receives it). This is a bit ambiguous and could refer to several things (or a combination of all of the above)...

Instance A

An individual on TRIAL would be given a stone by jurors to signify their verdict (i.e., black = guilt and white = acquittal). Thus, the giving of a white stone would signify innocence in the eyes of heaven and all of the benefits thereof!

Instance B

A custom existed in the ancient world. i.e., Two persons wishing to seal FRIENDSHIP would break a stone in two, with each party retaining half. This stone would give each party access to the home of the other. Thus, this would indicate friendship and access into heavenly glory—i.e., the home of Christ!

Instance C

Lastly, white stones would be given to notable people (e.g., victors in sporting games, etc.) that granted them ACCESS to prestigious banquets and feasts. In this case, Christ is granting those who repent and overcome access to the feast that will take place at the end of time (i.e., the Marriage Supper of the Lamb).

KEY – I believe it is likely an allusion to ALL THREE!

NOTE – Moreover, the fact that the stone would be marked by a NAME that no one else would know save for the one who received it signifies the UNIQUE relationship that each believer will have to Christ in eternity. I don’t believe that God just loves all people equally—I believe He loves us all UNIQUELY!

Let us MOVE ON to consider the words of Christ to the church at THYATIRA...

THYATIRA (TO THE WORD)

Revelation 2:18–29

18 “To the angel of the church in Thyatira write:

These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze. 19 I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first.

20 Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophet. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. 21 I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling. 22 So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways. 23 I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds.

24 Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan’s so-called deep secrets, ‘I will not impose any other burden on you, 25 except to hold on to what you have until I come.’

26 To the one who is victorious and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations— 27 that one ‘will rule them with an iron scepter and will dash them to pieces like pottery’[b]—just as I have received authority from my Father. 28 I will also give that one the morning star. 29 Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

THYATIRA (INITIAL ADDRESS)

Q. What do we know about ancient Thyatira?

A. Thyatira was a much SMALLER city than those previously mentioned (located about 20-miles southeast of Pergamum). Thyatira was the hometown of Lydia (i.e., Paul’s first convert in Macedonia cf. Acts 16:14). The city was known for its abundant CROPS and was controlled by a female-dominated DYE and CLOTH industry!

THYATIRA (SELF-DESCRIPTION)

Q. How did Christ reveal Himself in this passage?

Revelation 2:18

18 “To the angel of the church in Thyatira write: These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze.

A1. Christ presents Himself as the Son of God. i.e., A unique term denoting the DEITY of Christ. In other words, they were NOT hearing from any typical man or demi-god, but the One who presides over all in sovereign dominion.

A2. Moreover, His eyes were of fire and His feet are of bronze, again connecting to judgment. He was the One who had come to His people to ASSESS them, that they might be PURIFIED, PURGED and further REFINED.

THYATIRA (COMMENDATION)

Q. Does Christ offer any word of commendation (i.e., celebratory encouragement and praise)?

Revelation 2:19

19 I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first.

NOTE 1 – The church at Thyatira had several areas WORTHY of commendation. They were hard-working, loving, faithful and faith-filled, had endured MUCH. Moreover, this was a church with an UPWARD trajectory (v. 19b). Unlike the church at Ephesus (which was losing ground spiritually), this church was on a GOOD track!

NOTE 2 – Yet Christ—i.e., in love—noted issues that could serve to SABOTAGE this reality...

THYATIRA (REBUKE)

Revelation 2:20

20 Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophet. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols.

NOTE 1 – The church in Thyatira may have first heard the gospel from LYDIA, as she was converted under the ministry of Paul some decades earlier (cf. Acts 16). Now however, another WOMAN—i.e., a self-proclaimed prophetess—was influencing the church unto evil...

NOTE 2 – Jesus' primary rebuke concerned this prophetess, whom He calls JEZEBEL. It is doubtful that her name was truly Jezebel. More likely, she was corrupting the church at Thyatira in much the same way that Queen Jezebel corrupted the nation of Israel in the ERA of the Kings of Israel (cf. 1–2 Kings). She was operating in similar fashion to Jezebel—or in the spirit thereof...

NOTE 3 – This woman was teaching believers to COMPROMISE their allegiance to Christ by embracing the pagan culture all around them. She encouraged them to join in idol feasts and to INDULGE in the corresponding sexual immorality. APPARENTLY—according to v. 21—this had been going on for some time...

Revelation 2:21

21 I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling.

KEY – If Satan cannot overwhelm you by force, he will seek to CORRUPT you with subtle, internal compromises! Make no mistake—the spirit of Jezebel is very much alive and well (finding new avatars to work through). There are still forces seeking to corrupt the morality of the church, encouraging her to participate in the worldly affairs around them!

Christian, BE AWARE...

THYATIRA (REMEDY)

Q. What was the remedy for the spiritual condition that ailed them?

Revelation 2:24–25

24 Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan's so-called deep secrets, 'I will not impose any other burden on you, 25 except to hold on to what you have until I come.'

KEY – i.e., "Reject this teaching and the influence of evil without compromise. Do not forsake your reward to chase after the fleeting promises of evil. Live in light of the truth that I am coming soon, so hold on and do not let go!"

THYATIRA (PROMISE)

FYI – Christ makes several PROMISES in this text...

1) To Jezebel and Her Followers

Revelation 2:21–23

21 I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling. 22 So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways. 23 I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds.

KEY – God is willing to cut out and treat spiritual cancer before it consumes the whole of His Church. There is a time when He rises to purge and deal with sin! Recognize the MERCY of God in this. Moreover, recognize His SEVERITY in this (cf. Romans 11:22).

2) To the Faithful Pt. 1

Revelation 2:26–27, 29

26 To the one who is victorious and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations— 27 that one 'will rule them with an iron scepter and will dash them to pieces like pottery'—just as I have received authority from my Father. . . 29 Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

KEY – Those who serve Him will one day RULE and REIGN with Him when His kingdom is established on the earth. In the same way that the Father has given authority to Christ, Christ will give authority to those whom He chooses. They will rule with Him FOREVER, sharing in His victory and lordship! This is echoed in the words of the apostle PAUL...

2 Timothy 2:12

12 . . . If we endure, we will also reign with him.

3) To the Faithful Pt. 2

Revelation 2:28

28 I will also give that one the morning star.

NOTE – Though this expression is NOT fully explained herein, this likely refers to the fact that believers will have Christ as their reward. In other passages Christ is referred to as the MORNING STAR...

Revelation 22:16

16 “I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star.”

CONCLUSION PT. 1

Thus far we have covered FOUR churches...

Ephesus – the CARELESS church

Smyrna – the CROWNED church

Pergamum – the COMPROMISED church

Thyatira – the CORRUPTED church

KEY – Let the words spoken to them RESONATE in our hearts and minds!

CONCLUSION PT. 2

KEY – Thank you for taking the time to join us today. Should those of you who have joined us online wish to give, please do so through the giving portal of our church WEBSITE (www.NewLifeBarre.org). For those who are present, you may place your donation in the OFFERING BOXES in this Sanctuary.

Numbers 6:24–26

24 The Lord bless you

and keep you;

25 the Lord make his face shine on you

and be gracious to you;

26 the Lord turn his face toward you

and give you peace.