

02-09-06b Revelation

Let's resume our study now in Revelation chapter 2. We're examining the doctrine of Balaam. I should probably point out that the phrase used in our passage employs the Greek word *didoske*. And it is translated doctrine, but it could just as easily be translated teaching, teaching of Balaam.

And although Numbers 24 and 25 does not directly impugn Balaam, it doesn't show him conniving with the Moabites or with Balak, it is associated with him because it would appear that in delivering the oracle and stating in front of the Moabites and the Midianites this one clause, so long as they function with *hayil*, with integrity, with strength before God, all of these things would be true, that he sort of handed them the key. It would be like someone repeating the story of Achilles where his mother asked that her son would be protected and one or another of the gods said, fine, dip him in the river. And so she dipped him in, but she held him by the heel and his heel didn't get submerged.

And then somebody shot an arrow and it hit him in the heel and that was what finally killed Achilles. And then we have Achilles' heel and Achilles' tendon, all comes from that fable. This was the weakness that was exposed in the oracle of Balaam.

And so the teaching that says you can subvert the people of God by playing to their desires, finding what it is they like, what it is that can distract them from their reliance on God, this is the teaching of Balaam. It doesn't mean Balaam taught it, but it's derived from that episode and his name becomes a convenient epithet or a convenient label for it. So this is the veering off place from the narrow road that goes through the straight gate.

You veer off to the left into licentiousness, into compromise, into overextending the freedom that we have in Christ. We are free to avail ourselves and to enjoy and to exercise the capacity for life that we have, the capacity for happiness, the capacity for freedom. We have many wonderful blessings in America and there's nothing wrong with movies per se, there's nothing wrong with entertainment, there's nothing wrong with culture and art, nothing wrong with travel, nothing wrong with socializing, there's nothing intrinsically sinful in a lot of things, but it becomes sinful when your motivation is such that it becomes a substitute for the things of God.

You're going to work off your guilt or you're going to drown your feeling of inadequacy or you're going to distract yourself from your sense that you're not where you should be. People keep themselves busy. I would say that there is a cult of busyness in the United States, in particular in our generation.

People just stay busy. They don't slow down, they don't want to slow down. You've seen people that just can't sit in a chair for more than about five or ten minutes because if they're not busy, they have to think.

And if they think, they start feeling troubled, they start having bad thoughts. And this is a terrible

malady for a believer because we are commanded to stop. We are commanded.

What does the Bible say? Be still and know that I am God. It doesn't say get busy and know that I am God. You've got to sit down and be quiet and think.

We shouldn't have a problem slowing down from time to time and being at home in our own soul. But there are people who don't like the way they feel. They don't like the thoughts that enter their mind.

They don't like what happens when they are not distracted. And so every waking moment, if they're not busy with a task, they'll flip on the TV. And start munching on that bubble gum for the brain, chewing gum for the mind.

It doesn't accomplish anything, but it keeps your mind off the realities of your life. Why is it that the average American watches 4.5 hours of television per day? I've lost track. The statistics clear off the meter on how many murders and acts of violence children see in television in the course of a week, but it's in the multiple dozens.

And in a year, it's in the thousands. And they say, we wonder why our children are prone to violence. Well, they see it constantly on the television.

There's always somebody slugging somebody or somebody shooting somebody or somebody bonking somebody over the head. And we wonder why they can't control children in school and they're immersed in it. But people use the television as a babysitter.

They use it as something to keep their kids distracted and out of trouble because their kids can't sit still either. Their children don't have self-control. Their children don't have a thought life that's independent of activities.

Children who are hooked on activity are going to have trouble with concentration because activities for children are always coordinated by adults. It's a channeled set of actions. Somebody planned it.

Somebody chose the space and the materials. And the child just bounces along like a marble rolling down a little marble maze. Well, the most valuable gift that you can give a child is the ability to think.

And in that thinking, to develop self-control. There is no greater gift that a parent can give a child than a mentor, a teacher, anybody in a position of influence, a grandparent, a relative, anybody that spends time with a child is to foster and encourage self-control. Give them opportunities for self-control.

And it's a very difficult lesson. It's not fatal. A lot of us grew up maybe and had our parents do that.

Others of us grew up and they did not. You can develop it as an adult, but you get a lot of bumps on your head along the way. And, of course, the Word of God and the Spirit of God, one of the fruits mentioned in Scripture, fruit of the Spirit, is self-control.

So it's not a fatal malady, but it can certainly give you a head start if you learn to have self-control. This all goes to the idea of being still. We have a cult of activity.

We have a cult of busyness. And you see people that you just never see them still. They've got to be doing something.

It's like an addiction. And if you're a believer and you can't stop and use your mind and have mental activity in the place of physical activity, you're never going to grow. Your knowledge may increase, but you will not grow.

You will be ever learning and never coming to a knowledge of the truth. Because to grow and to digest and put into use the truth of the Word of God, you have to stop and meditate. There is no substitute.

You can sit in Bible class all you want. You can hear all the tapes you want. Go to all the churches you want.

Get involved in all the activities you want. If you do not spend time as the tree planted by the rivers of water, you're not going to bring forth your fruit in its season. This is what happened in Pergamos.

Two ways they could go. Instead of staying in the middle, instead of literally staying centered on the plan and purpose of God, a portion of the people went off into the doctrine of Balaam and they were offered these activities. Pergamos was a thriving, bustling city, a center of emperor worship, a center of idolatry.

It had Zeus Soter, it had Asclepius Soter, it had Athena and all these other temples and cults. And with each of these, there were feasts. And if you had a social circle, you had people with whom you worked and hobnobbed.

We tend to think of dry, dusty piles of rubble as these ancient cities. The ancient cities were just like our modern day cities. There were people interacting and having business and friends and acquaintances and family and weddings and all kinds of things.

And they didn't have movies and they didn't have the internet and they didn't have cable TV. They had feasts. And they had arts.

And they had fetes, F-E-T-E-S, these dues, these social gatherings in honor of, well, this is Zeus Soter's birthday or this is his anniversary with Athena or whatever else. And it was an excuse to have a big party. And they would throw a party and everybody would come and they would talk

and they would mingle and they would chatter and gossip and invite each other over to their houses.

And in some cases, they would kind of devolve into a drunken orgy because, after all, they were ancient Greeks. And if you've ever wandered around in Greece, heaven help you. When you start looking at the little trinket shops and things, they've got all these debauched and debased little artifacts that they've dug up out of the ground.

You can't believe the little lecherous, lewd objects that their kids played with and that they had sitting in the windowsill over the kitchen sink. And they just had these little naked figures with all kinds of distorted anatomy all over Greece. It was just a part of the culture.

Well, here you are in a church in Pergamos, a capital in Asia, and immersed, submerged, drowning in a Greek culture. It's what everybody does. It's normal.

It's usual. It's tolerated. People in various states of undress.

And it was not considered, just like in modern day America anymore, you watch what goes on among people and people shacking up and going and living together and boyfriend and girlfriend engaging in relations. It's as casual as a kiss used to be. It's as casual as a handshake in some cases.

And that's how it got to be in Greece. And it was like warming up the water around a frog. The church there rationalized and compromised and drifted away and began to indulge and participate and incorporate and synthesize this into their church life.

And it's the doctrine of Balaam. It is the Achilles heel by which these 23 or 24,000 fell. We had a discussion on the break on the difference in the number there between numbers and what Paul says in Corinthians.

And it's an approximation. Nobody went and counted and got an exact body count. It came right on the nose to 24,000.

Or 23 and some change. If you round up you get 24, round down you get 23. It is interesting to scratch your head and wonder why did God let there be a discrepancy? Why didn't Paul say the same thing as numbers? But it's a subject for another time.

I am a stickler for detail and it is curious. But what it does remind us of is the fact that an awful lot of people, roughly 12,000 from every tribe in Israel, there are some people who say well maybe Paul didn't include the leadership because the leaders got executed first. Remember they hung them all out in the sun? And if you had 10 or so from every tribe that would account for, or I guess you would have to have about 100 from every tribe to get to 1,000 extra people.

At any rate, an awful lot of people lost their lives for going to a party, for hobnobbing with people

that worshipped a different God. And we have an awful lot of ecumenicalism. I'll tell you one good thing that Chuck Colson has been doing for the American public is pointing out in his little Breakpoint series day after day after day, don't be sucked in by the backlash from 9-11.

We're coming up on the anniversary. This is September 6th. We're coming up on the one year anniversary of the September 11th attack last year.

And once again the liberal press and establishment in particular is knocking themselves out to say let's not get mad at the Muslims. Let's not indict Islam for this. And there is a huge movement.

There are churches who are trying to reach out and make friends with the Muslims and so forth. That is not the God of the Bible. Allah of Islam is not the God of Abraham even though they claim that he is.

He's not. God did not say anything that's written in the Koran. God did not talk to Mohammed.

Mohammed was not God's prophet. And if Mohammed was not God's prophet then guess what? Allah is not the God of Israel. Whatever else they may say.

So don't get this ecumenical oh well can't we resolve our differences and well it's pretty close and can't we all just get along. If you get along that way you're going to end up in Pergamos. This is where Satan's throne is.

This is where Satan dwells. And this is the dwelling part. This is the social life.

This is the relaxing time that he's talking about here. And if you relax too much you end up off the road and you end up losing your reward. So this is the teaching of Balaam.

If it causes you to lose your Chayil C-H-A-Y-I-L the root meaning of that word is strength. And every time I look at that word I think of Samson because that's the word in the Samson story. And he kept toying with Delilah kept playing games with her.

It was a compromise. She was a Philistine woman. He was a Nazirite.

He knew better. Nazirites not only were they not supposed to cut their hair and not engage in strong drink they weren't supposed to mess with women. And you don't think he was over there playing bridge with Delilah or with the gal that he got engaged to.

And then her father married her off to another Philistine. Samson was playing the field amongst the Philistine women. But it came to a crux when he finally told her the source of his Chayil.

His seven braids. Seven braids on his head right there around his brain where his contact with his soul is and where he's supposed to be faithful to God. And he gave away the key and he lost his Chayil.

And he lost his eyesight. And he lost his opportunity to do more great things. The only thing he could do was bring down the house on himself and the leaders of the Philistines.

But that's what we're talking about in Revelation chapter 2 in the one area, one half, one side of the sharp two edged sword. The second side is he says, I have a few things against you in verse 14 of Revelation 2 because you have there those who hold notice he doesn't say because you hold the doctrine of Balaam. He says, you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam.

What's the point here? You should not have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam. You should not tolerate their presence. What is it that splits churches? What is it that divides believers who are supposed to be unified? Read 1 Corinthians chapter 1. I hear that there are wars and divisions among you.

And in part I believe it. It's sort of a pun because he says, I hear that your church is split into parts and I partly believe it. My belief in you is split into parts as well.

Paul says, you've divided over what teacher you think is the best and you have divisions. You have wars among you. Well, how does Satan drive in a wedge? And people will do this in the name of unity and oneness and they'll say, oh, well why can't we all just get along and let's tolerate each other and well, we all believe in Jesus, so if some of us want to do this, why can't we all be one? And they do it in the name of unity.

Well, look at what Paul says. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all who is above all and through all and in you all. When you compromise in this way and you go after the desires of the world and you incorporate Dr. Phil thinking into the church and you incorporate psychology into the church and you incorporate ecumenicalism into the church and you incorporate compromise and watering down and dilution, it is the teaching of Balaam.

It saps your strength and in the name of being unified, that's what divides the church. If those things are excluded, your church will be one. It's one of those ironies of scripture.

When you try to be inclusive and you tolerate people who are not of the faith, you're saying that you're one and you've split your church. It's like putting rotten apples in a barrel of good apples. My daughter was telling me all the chemistry of that, how the bad apple gives off these things that cause the others to go bad.

That's exactly what happens. If you want a unified church that serves one Lord, recognizes one faith and one baptism, not a second baptism and another Holy Ghost and all the other weird things that are going around, you will have a unified church. That's what God is after, one church, indivisible.

And people in the church, if they are going to hold to some other doctrine, if they are outside the church, you still have one church, don't you? But if you keep them in the church and tolerate their

presence, now you have factions and divisions because they are among you but they are not of you, as John says. And Jesus indicts the church at Pergamos because he says, you have among you these who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel. And notice it says, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit a poor new sigh.

Well, what is the deal with eating things sacrificed to idols? Because in 1 Corinthians 8, don't you have a whole chapter where Paul says, hey, you know, it's a matter of your conscience. If you are smart enough and mature enough to know that it just lays in front of a rock for an hour and it's a perfectly good piece of meat, go ahead and eat it. But some of you are weak and for the weak to eat that would afflict his conscience and for him it would be sin.

Whatever is not of faith is sin. But how does he conclude that chapter? He says, if there is any chance that me eating that meat is going to cause a brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again. It's the law of love over the law of liberty.

And it's the very principle we have here. Do not let your liberty turn into license. Don't let your freedom in Christ create sin and put a stumbling block in front of others.

There is nothing wrong intrinsically with a piece of meat that somebody laid in front of what you know to be just a rock carved in the shape of an idol and it's a perfectly good meat. But, this eating things sacrifice to idols in Numbers 25 was a participation in. It says they joined themselves to Baal Peor.

They didn't just go down to the market and buy a piece of meat that somebody had used for a religious purpose and then gotten rid of. They went and participated. They said the words.

They bowed down. They went along with these women because they were pretty and they wanted to be friendly with them, be chummy with them. So they went and said oh fine, that's what got Solomon in so much trouble with his concubines and so forth.

So, he taught Balaam gave Balak the key to undermining Israel. And tolerating these people will create a situation. It will cause sin in people who would not be caused to stumble otherwise.

Keeping licentious people, keeping people who compromise with the world in your fellowship creates a stumbling block. It causes problems where none should be. Because it distracts.

It fractures. It causes people to wrestle with mental attitude sins. How do I know where I'm being tolerant of a weaker brother and where I am failing to separate from somebody I need to separate from.

It creates friction. It creates strife. People can, for the sake of friendship and loyalty, get into sin and get into evil that they would not be a part of.

And it is the pastor's responsibility first and foremost as well as the other believers in the church. That's why you have the individual you. He says, I have this against you.

You have there those who are putting a stumbling block in front of other believers. When he says there, he doesn't mean in the city of Pergamos. They don't have to purge people out of the city, but they do have to purge them out of the church.

And one of the advantages of having a very small group is that we can, it's almost impossible to infiltrate anybody in who could divide us in that way. But the larger a group gets, the more vigilant everyone has to be. So, eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit pornoosai, to be disloyal to the truth, to compromise the truth.

That's what this is talking about. And we have to analyze in our culture what that means. We don't have little nymphets coming over and trying to get us down to the big feasts to go have an orgy.

We have nymphets in the media. We have nymphets on the internet. We have nymphets in a lot of other places.

You can't believe the problem that pornography is in Christian circles today. Because believers who do not have self-control and have access to the internet are distracted and led astray. Now, verse 15, you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans.

Which thing I believe and I hate. Now, we saw these in Ephesus, right? And in Ephesus, if you go back to that first letter, verse 6, you have this, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He says, this is in your favor in Ephesus.

Here's the Nicolaitans and they're doing things. He doesn't say you hate the Nicolaitans and I hate them too. He says, you hate their deeds.

You hate the Nicolaitans and that's what I hate, is their deeds. Because these are believers. God doesn't hate believers, but he can sure hate what we do sometimes.

Nikos, conquer, be victorious over, to rule over, dominate. Laos is the people. Dominating the people.

Now, what is this? This is, you've got Scylla on the one hand, you've got Charybdis on the other. And this is the opposite extreme. This is religion.

This is Phariseeism. This is structure. And we will create something to make sure that people conform.

And this has expressed itself in our generations, recent generations in our country, for example, in denominations. We'll make a creed. We'll set up some rules.

We'll have a formula. We'll make you sign a statement of faith. We'll have accountability.

You can meet with me and I'll mentor you and I'll disciple you and I'll hold you accountable. We've got this big accountability kick going where, well, let's get together with a few other people and we'll ask each other searching questions. Well, I noticed when I was in your office, you've got a good looking secretary.

Have you been lusting after her in your heart? And the guy might say, well, I might ask you the same thing. What got you all interested in my secretary? It's all of this trying to, you know, they had several notorious, well publicized falls from grace of pastors and things and so they said, we've got to do something about this. We'll implement some human measures to help keep you strong.

It was rife all down through the seminary. I got stuff in the mail. They handed out books.

They had tapes. They had videos. They had chapel services telling everybody, this is just awful.

This really gives the church a black eye. We're going to fix it. And so, here's our principles of personal accountability.

Here's our program. Here's what we're going to do. This is our denomination.

This is our church structure. These are our insurance measures. Human energy trying to implement divine standards.

That's the Nicolaitans. And it never, never works. You cannot force in from the outside what only God can create on the inside that's supposed to work its way out.

Jesus told the disciples this. We saw it in Luke. Don't you know that it's not what goes into a man that defiles him.

It's what proceeds forth from the heart. By the same token, it is not what goes into a man that sanctifies him. It's not the pressure you put.

He's not like a fence post that you can put in a vat and pressurize creosote into him so that he won't rot. But you would think looking at Christianity today and going around to the various programs, and you've heard me name them before, and I'm trying to be charitable and not just keep on inditing them over and over again. But you know, and I won't name the Jabez people, and I won't name the experiencing God people, and I won't name the promise keepers, and I won't name all the others that are doing this kind of thing.

We'll just let them be anonymous and nameless. But it fails. It's Nicolaitanism because it's power over the people.

I'm going to exert an influence on people, and I'm going to squeeze preservative into the fibers of their being from the outside. I'll frown at them when they do wrong. I'll smile at them when they do well.

I'll pat them on the back from the pulpit. I'll hold them up and put their name in the bulletin and give them fame and glory when they do well. And we'll counsel and we'll meet and we'll pray and we'll do all these other things when they do badly.

And we will bear one another's burdens. See, it's in the Scriptures. Bear one another's burdens.

They don't go on down to verses where he says, each one shall carry his own load. We have to be transformed by the renewing of our mind on the inside. It is a divine work of God.

We cannot transform each other. We can encourage, we can pray, we can encourage one another to love and good works. That's the whole purpose of forsaking not the assembling of yourselves together in Hebrews.

Encourage one another unto love and good works. But encourage is a far cry from Nicolaitanism. Nicolaitanism, this is where you get people excommunicating one another and browbeating one another and kicking one another and stomping one another and running one another down.

If you've ever heard Andy Griffith talk about football then you'll know what I'm referring to there. That's Nicolaitanism. It is the opposite.

We can fall off into licentiousness. We can also fall off into legalism, tabooism. You know, don't smoke, don't drink, don't dance, don't go to movies and I forget, oh, don't gamble.

Those were the five big bad news things when I was a little boy going to a certain denominational church that shall remain nameless. Just, you know, you've got these taboos and if you see somebody doing these things then you know that they're not, they're probably not even saved. They're a terror amongst the wheat.

Well, what's the point here? You have among you these who do these things. Up in Ephesus, they hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans. Here in Pergamos, he says, you have those who hold the teaching of Balaam and you have those who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

Which thing I hate? It's the teaching that he hates. These are believers, but they are misled, they're misguided, they're doing things in human strength. This culminates in our day with people who are post-millennial.

Which is a fancy way of saying, they're not thinking that Jesus will come and bring in the kingdom. They're thinking, we will bring in the kingdom and then Jesus will come. That, in a nutshell, is the difference between pre-millennialism and post-millennialism.

The pre and post is, when will Jesus come? Pre-millennialists, which is what we are, we look at our Bible and it says, the world is going to go to rack and ruin, the Lord Jesus is going to come and he's going to emplace his kingdom. He's going to fulfill the kingdom promises and we will have the millennium. Post-millennialists say, we have got to shoulder the load, we've got to improve the world, we've got to get the conditions right and then the king will come and rule over.

So, who is doing the work and who gets the credit for the kingdom? Well, in the post-millennial world, we do. And you would be surprised at how the thinking of post-millennialists has leaked out of their camp into ours. There's a lot of people who claim to be pre-millennial who are still in social action and they're picketing clinics and they're plaguing congressmen and they're politically active and socially active.

There's nothing intrinsically wrong with getting involved in the political scene. But, if you think that this is a part of your spirituality, if you think it's a part of your walk before God, you're sadly mistaken because this world is not going to improve. Nicolaitans, you have those who hold the doctrine.

You cannot tolerate licentiousness and you cannot tolerate legalism. If you find people who are setting up human standards and trying to use human strength to enforce and emplace spirituality, you've got to get rid of them. You have to purge them out of the fellowship.

Churches don't do this in either case very much. You know why? Because it's a warm body with a wallet in its back pocket and we're all about numbers. We want to grow, we want to be numerous, we want to be able to talk about how many we baptized or how many came by letter or by statement, we want to talk about how many joined our fellowship, we want to talk about how many are at our worship service or in our Sunday school or how much money we brought in.

We've got the little tote boards that hang behind the platform showing how many were here this Sunday, how many were here last Sunday, what was the offering, etc. We've got the little envelopes, who brought their Bible to Sunday school, statistics, the more the merrier. Well, if they're here and putting money in the offering, that's something because now we can budget, we can plan, we can have committees, we can have programs, we can do things, we can have trips, we can have an impact, and it is wrong, wrong, wrong.

But that kind of thinking makes people loathe to weed out Nicolaitanism and loathe to weed out licentiousness and those who are there for the wrong reasons and dragging others down with them and distracting and leading astray. But the penalty is severe. Look at verse 16, change your mind, you better get off of this kick of growing numerically and start trying to grow spiritually.

You better get off this kick of trying to keep everybody in the fold at any expense. Can't we all just get along? Please don't leave. There are people that need to leave.

There are people that should not be in a fellowship of growing believers because they have gone

into one of these two areas of error. Jesus says, change your mind or else I will come to you quite suddenly and I will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. Now, why would this be something of a threat? If Jesus says, I will come suddenly and fight against them with the sword of my mouth, why would we care? Okay, go ahead and come on and hack and slash.

If you've ever seen anybody swing a sword in a tight space with a lot of people in it, what happens? It is often not just the target. Bring this into modern language. If somebody comes in and says, I'm going to get that guy with my automatic weapon and he's standing in a crowd, do you think he's the only one that's going to get hit with bullets? There is cursing by association.

And if Jesus comes in to discipline these people who have gone into licentiousness, discipline people who have gone into legalism, it is going to hurt the church. The pain of that discipline is cursing by association. There is blessing by association and there is cursing by association.

And if you associate yourself with someone who is under the curse of God, under the discipline of God, then you might as well stand by for some pain and some suffering because you will suffer with them. Because you have entered them into the fold, you have brought them into the fellowship, you have extended the right hand and you have embraced them and you saw what happened to Cosby and the other guy in Israel when they embraced and Phineas came in with the sword, the discipline was intended for the Israelite, but it went right through the Midianite gal as well, the princess of Midian. He shoved them both through with one spear.

Cursing by association. I will come to you suddenly, I will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. This is judgment, this is discipline.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes. Interestingly, it is from the same root as Nicolaitan, Nikos, but this is to overcome in the genuine sense.

You are not overcoming the people. This is an area of subjectivity, eyes on people. The whole idea of legalism is I am going to set up these rules because I don't like what people are doing.

We have to overcome our own flesh, our own path through the world, our own encounters with what Satan puts in front of us. He who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. This is such a great contrast here because think about it.

This eating things sacrifice to idols, in verse 14, you are partaking, indulging in the appetizing feasts of the world. It is alluring, it is tasty. How many people have tried to stay on a diet, but here comes the cheesecake, and here comes the chocolate mousse, and here comes the tasty, calorie laden, fat laden, gravy dripping stuff, and it is alluring.

You say, oh, well, I will start again tomorrow and indulge. Jesus says, if you will refrain from this temporary ashes in the mouth eating, I will give you the hidden manna. What do we know about

manna? Why doesn't he say hidden bread? It is manna, but it is hidden manna.

This is manna that has not yet come down to earth. The manna that came down and fed the Israelites was not hidden anymore, was it? But over in Psalm 78-25, he is talking about how Israel was sustained in the wilderness, and he is poetically speaking, and he says, man ate the bread of angels, ate the food of angels, ate the bread of ate the bread of angels, ate the bread of angels, ate the bread of angels, ate the bread of angels, ate the bread of angels, ate the bread of angels, ate the bread of angels, ate the bread of angels, ate the bread of angels, ate the bread of angels, bread of angels, ate the bread of ate the bread of angels, ate the bread of angels, ate the bread of angels, ones on a hamburger, sesame seeds, kind of pale, same thing every day. Look at these banquets they are laying out there.

All we have to do is nod our head to this God and we can eat this big feast and have fun with these women. How can you beat that? Jesus says be faithful and you will have some food the like of which has never been seen. Manna, the food of angels, it doesn't even begin to describe it.

But you have to have faith. It has to be real to you. It has to be something for which you are willing to wait.

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. The white stone was given to the individual in a court case that was found innocent. The jury, the judge, would give him a white stone.

Black stone, the black marble means you are guilty, you are condemned. The white stone means, in fact there was a movie 15-20 years ago called The Black Marble and it had this as its theme. But the white stone means you are declared innocent.

Do you want a jury of your peers who set themselves up as Nicolaitans to tell you that you are spiritual and tell you that you are acceptable and that you are in or do you want God himself to hand you the white stone? Do you want to gain a reputation and a name among people who have set up their own little petty standards or do you want a reputation and a name from God? That's the choice we make. If we veer into licentiousness, we lose the hidden manna. If we veer into legalism and settle for a standing and an acceptance by people, we lose standing and acceptance with God.

A new name written which no one knows except him who receives it, its intimacy, its fellowship, its recognition. God had to think about you individually to give you a name that's unique to you. It's between you and him.

That's what I call fellowship and that's what's available to us. We have to analyze our own lives. We have to stop the world and get off and sit still and think about God and think about how these things manifest themselves in our individual lives.

We have areas of excessive freedom and we have areas where we are conforming to an artificial standard. Every one of us does. We've got to identify those.

We've got to change our minds. Look at the wonderful rewards when we do. It's a glorification to God.

It manifests the greatness of our Lord Jesus Christ and it's a wonderful future for us as well. We're going to have to stop here. We're going to pick up next time with the church at Thyatira.

Let's close in a word of prayer. Father, what a privilege it is to be in this life, to be living in this dispensation, to be sustained by your grace and to have such tremendous opportunities the like of which has never been seen in human history. We pray that we will be ever aware and sensitive to the potential, the calling that you have issued to us, the opportunity you have placed before us.

We pray that we will be responsive and sensitive to the ministry of the Spirit, that we will avail ourselves of your grace and your provision and seize and lay hold of these potentials that are placed before us so that we can live in a way that is pleasing in your sight and glorifying to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We pray it in his name. Amen.