

Rev 25-10-26b

We resume our study now. We're looking at these letters, particularly in Pergamos and Thyatira. One of the problems with the approach that says that these letters somehow map out the progress of church history, beginning with Ephesus and the early apostolic church, and then Smyrna, the persecuted church, and Rome, and the lions, and the Colosseums, and the persecutions of that era.

And this is kind of a widespread notion that the church is mapped to different eras, and you get to the Philadelphia church, and that this is supposed to be the Reformation, one thing or another, but is that it draws attention away from the applicability of the earlier letters to our present time. And there is no more applicable letter among the seven than both of these letters to Pergamos and Thyatira. One of the reasons I insist on saying Pergamos, I've put Pergamum in one or two of our note materials, and you'll see it referred to as Pergamum, but Pergamos is a reminder of the name, and you can't overdo the names, because when we get to Sardis, nobody can really figure out what that word even means, and that has implications for the content of the letter itself.

But we think about the Latin term per, like per annum or per cent, and we think, well, this is, how much is associated with this? So this fraction or that per is a referential term, but in Greek, this has a very negative connotation. It means to pervert or perturb or otherwise create a negative effect on something. Well, what's the rest of the name? Gamos.

Gamos is the word for marriage, and so pergamos can mean, depending on how you choose to translate it, that there is a perverted marriage, and this has been understood, and I think there's some traction in this view that the church in Pergamos, by listening to those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before Israel in the area of sexual immorality and idolatry, is being wedded to the world, if you will, and worldly views, worldly views and positions and policies, and I didn't take the time to look up the statistics because your own personal experience will tell you there has never been a time in church history where there was more toleration of perversion than now. It is acceptable in most Christian circles and in most denominational Christian churches for young people to sleep together outside of marriage to commit fornication, to have partners of the same gender, to tolerate, if not conduct or engage in these activities, to embrace and be very non-confrontational and non-condemnatory of those who do. This is why I have been emphasizing in both Pergamos and Thyatira that their toleration of those who hold these views, those who practice these works, the deeds of the Nicolaitans, the Ephesians hate those deeds, and that's important because if someone is practicing the deeds, this is a time for separation.

There is a difference in discernment and judging. We don't find somebody and persecute them. Notice all of these per words, persecute, pervert, perturb.

This is to do something harmful, evil, or negative. So Pergamos is something that is injurious or

threatening to marriage. And ultimately the most high and holy relationship that is metaphorically referred to with a marriage figure is Christ and the church.

And those things which pull the bride away from the groom or render that relationship non-functional threatening it by infidelity or some other form of sinful or evil behavior is in view. What is it about idolatry? Having another God isn't just finding Zeus attractive. Why was the worship of Molech and Baal so heinous that God sent the Israelites in to wipe out the populations that practice these things, Asherah and the rest? It isn't just that they believe in something other than God.

It is the practices that that belief system promotes, that it entails, that it encourages. And those who have these beliefs, it's not just the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, it is the works of the Nicolaitans. It isn't just the doctrine of Balaam.

He teaches Balak to put a stumbling block before Israel. They stumble spiritually. It defiles and corrupts, perverts, distorts, and ultimately destroys the relationship of God's people to God himself.

It's what it does to the relationship. And we sometimes think of actions in terms of, well, is this a bad action? Physical intimacy as an action is not sinful. It's designed by God.

I heard an interesting point made by a gal who was in discourse with progressive Christians. She is a more traditional conservative Christian, such as we are, but there were others who wanted to do the Pergamos and Thyatira thing. And why are you so down on abortion? And why are you so unaccepting of LGBTQ plus? Why this seems so unloving? Jesus preached love and acceptance and non-condemnation and non-judgment and so on.

And she talked about the fact that in the human body, we have a complete circulatory system. We have a complete digestive system. We have a complete set of senses when we're healthy for hearing and seeing and speaking.

But we only have half of a reproductive system. Men cannot produce children because we've only got half of the system. Women cannot produce children independently.

They've only got half of a system. Doth not nature itself teach you that the design is for a man and a woman to unite and the two shall become one flesh? You go all the way back to the early chapters of Genesis. A man and a woman, a man will leave his father and mother who were a man and a woman that generated a male child.

A man shall leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife and the two shall be one flesh. There was a model in the parent generation. There's a model in the generation of these who are getting married.

And each has a half of a reproductive system. Common sense should tell you this is the natural design. This is the divine design.

And those who want to contemplate other forms of covenanted, happy, someone approached the same girl and said, well, but I'm a practicing homosexual and I have my live-in lover and we and others that we know claim to be Christians and we see fruit in our lives. We have the fruit of the spirit. We have peace and we have joy.

We love, we're committed, we're monogamous in our same sex relationship. Hear me closely, please register this point. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with love and joy and peace.

There is nothing intrinsically wrong with commitment. There is also nothing intrinsically righteous in them. Joy is not righteousness.

Peace is not righteousness. Love as a concept or as a practice to love something or someone is not inherently righteous. So to say, didn't Jesus say by their fruit, you shall know them.

And we have the fruit of the spirit in our homosexual relationship or in our relationship of fornication or my relationship in adultery. I and my mistress or I and my secret married man lover and we meet in motels and do scurrilous things when nobody's looking, but we're in love and it's joyful and it's fulfilling and we're satisfied and we're gratified. And how can God condemn this? Debbie Boone, it can't be wrong if it feels so right.

Those things in and of themselves are not righteous. It is peace that glorifies God that counts. It is love that glorifies God.

It is joy that is approved, celebrated and centered in the Lord that counts. Any godless pagan unbeliever. Hitler had dogs and I'm sure he played with them and got joy from them.

He may have loved Eva Brown. I assume he did to use an oft abused. People say, if you invoke Hitler, you've lost your argument.

But I use him as an extreme example in this case because the worst people in the world, Al Capone had kids and loved them. And you see mob bosses throwing weddings for their daughter and there's love and family fellowship. Those things are either righteous or unrighteous.

They are either meaningful or not meaningful depending on the presence of God in them. Do they glorify God? Do they reflect God? Anything you want to name, there are marriages that are the worst abusive, heinous sources of suffering and hardship and persecution and conflict and abuse of the worst sorts. And you say, but it's a marriage.

Marriage is neither evil nor good. Marriage gains value and merit when it is infused with God, where this is the threefold cord that is not quickly broken. By the way, this is completely off topic.

Bear with me for like one minute. If you've ever heard the song, Hallelujah by Leonard Cohen, wrote it back in, I think the early eighties. And it says, I heard there was a secret chord that

David played and it pleased the Lord.

I heard a guy investigate this. Is there really a secret chord, C-H-O-R-D, that David played? He went on to talk about, those of you who are musically inclined, David's harp was diatonically tuned, meaning it plays a major C. Any of y'all that have been to a piano, C-D-E-F-G-A-B-C, you play the white keys, that's a diatonic scale. You can play the entire song, Hallelujah, on the white keys, except for one chord.

There's one chord in that song and it is an E major. And you got to have a G sharp for that. You need a black key.

It's the only chord in the whole song that you need a black key. And so he was making the case that E major is the secret chord. He went on to say in a diatonic scale, bear with me now, those of you that know a little bit about music and in the song, he says, it goes like this.

He says, you play the fourth, the fifth, the minor fall, the major lift. The fourth, you go up four. And so the fourth is F. So if you're playing a C, then you go up and you play F. The fifth is G, the fourth, the fifth.

Well, the E major that is the secret chord, you can't play on David's harp unless he detuned a string, is E. And that's the third, C-D-E. It's the third of that scale. And so he was making a comparison to it's the third chord.

And in a marriage, which Cohen is talking about, a relationship between a man and a woman and talking about the need for there to be not an illicit relationship like David with Bathsheba who broke your throne and cut your hair, that there should be one in which God is present. He is the third chord. He is the mystery that you can't get from the diatonic.

Anyway, I thought that was all very interesting. Those of you that have music, that's my one minute digression. Threefold chord is not quickly broken.

And marriage should be characterized by the presence of Jesus Christ. It should be a reflection of Christ and the church. Christ so loved the church that he gave himself for it, that he might present it to himself without spot or blemish or any such thing.

It should be holy. So that's what's going on here in the doctrine of Balaam and of Jezebel, the teaching that says, it's okay for these people to be present in your midst, to maintain fellowship with those who hold these views. It isn't, well, I don't practice them and I don't approve of them.

And I mentioned last time, my dad used to say, Rudy toot toot, we are the boys from the Institute. We don't smoke and we don't chew and we don't go with girls who do, which he found quite humorous. But to go with girls who do, to maintain fellowship with people who embrace, approve and practice these prohibited, divinely proscribed behaviors is a point of failure.

And it is called out by the Lord Jesus. And we have to curate our own relationships and touch not the unclean thing, hate the garment spotted by the flesh. It doesn't mean that you can't reach in and pull someone out of the fire.

We'll get there in James and looking at Jude and some of these others. Peter talks about what is our policy when we are in association with those who are doing bad things. But Jesus says, I have this against you.

Jezebel, let's talk about Thyatira. We've looked at Balaam in great detail. Look at those seven oracles, look at number four, look at these, the seven altars, the seven rams and the seven bullocks.

When we do numbers, we're gonna spend some time in numbers 23 and 24. But here we are in another set of sevens. And it is no accident that when you get to number four, there's something special going on.

Look at the seven feasts in Israel. What about number four? I'm just saying, in a set of seven, pay attention to number four. Here's number four, Thyatira.

These things says the son of God who has eyes like flaming fire and his feet like fine brass. I know your works, love, service, faith, and patience. Four things.

He notes four things in Thyatira that are good. Notice, what does it begin with? Love. The greatest of these is love.

I know your works. Love. Love.

Patience. Love, service, faith, and patience. Their service is motivated by love.

This is what did not happen in Ephesus. You can contrast Thyatira with the outside brackets. We haven't looked at Laodicea yet, but we've looked at Ephesus.

You've lost your first love. Jesus says to Thyatira, you've got the love nailed. I know your works.

And your love drives service. It's based on faith. Faith is the means by which you are performing these works of ministry to one another.

You're doing the one another's out of love for one another. That is great. And your patience, you're persevering, you're enduring, you're holding up.

Be patient. That was Smyrna. As for your works, the last are more than the first.

I know your works. And in these areas of love and service and faith and patience, you're better now than you were at the beginning. This is great.

Nevertheless. You just wish things would stop before the nevertheless. Nevertheless, I have a few things against you because you permit, you allow, you tolerate that woman, Jezebel, who

calls herself a prophetess.

Those who say they are Jews, but are not, they're a synagogue of Satan. She says she's a prophetess, but she's not. She teaches and seduces my servants to the very same things Balaam promoted via Balak that disqualified Israel from God's blessing.

Sexual immorality, association with idolatry. Same things we saw in Acts chapter 15. Gentiles, if you don't do anything else, you have got to refrain from these things.

I'll put on you no other burden. There's a really great wordplay there that we're going to see in verse 24. We'll get there.

I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality and she did not repent. Why is Jezebel used to characterize this woman? Her name was probably not Jezebel. Jezebel was the daughter of Ethbaal.

If you read your Old Testament, go back to first Kings. She was the daughter of Ethbaal. He was the king of Sidon.

Remember up the coast, Tyre and Sidon? Ethbaal is the king of Sidon. Ethbaal, Baal. It would be like Pharaoh in Egypt having incorporated the name of Set or Isis or Toth or one of their other gods.

The king of Sidon, his title, this is not his personal name, Ethbaal. That's like Pharaoh. He is the priest of Ashtart and he murdered his predecessor, Thales, and he killed that king so that he could seize the throne by force.

He murdered his predecessor and took the throne. So Jezebel comes down, the daughter of Ethbaal, and marries Ahab to seal a trade alliance between Israel and Sidon, Israel and Phoenicia. Jezebel immediately tried to exterminate the prophets of the Lord, the prophets of Yahweh.

This is 1 Kings 18, 13. And so Ahab is sort of a project that Jezebel runs and she brokers her power through Ahab. She's not formally on the highest throne in the land.

She is the puppeteer for Ahab. So there is no worse woman in the Old Testament scriptures than Jezebel. She is the summation of all things evil.

And you remember Elijah's back and forth with Ahab, Jezebel, and this persecution. You get to 1 Kings 21 in the story of Naboth's vineyard and how Jezebel engineers all Ahab does when he can't get Naboth to sell him the property. He goes and sulks and he won't eat food.

Jezebel sees it. Jezebel exercises the power through the shell of Ahab. She forges letters and gets Naboth charged, tried, and convicted of treason and executed.

And God does not intervene. God doesn't send Elijah up there and say, Elijah, stand before the

door of Naboth and don't allow Jezebel's scheme to succeed. Naboth dies and if you read closely, it's not right there in 1 Kings 21, but if you do your research, you will find in the later references back to this, didn't just kill Naboth, killed his entire family, all of his household, so that there would be no claimants to his estate.

Jezebel got everybody related to Naboth killed along with him. And worshipers of Baal and Ashtar, this by the way, originated in Babylon. And when Cyrus defeated Babylon back in the days of Cyrus, the religion's center moved from Babylon to Thyatira.

The city symbol of Thyatira, they had Ashtareth, they had Baal, they had groves. It was called the abomination of the Sidonians. You find this in 2 Kings 23, three, six and seven, you find it in Ezekiel 36, 15.

All of this moved through Sidon and eventually ended up in this area. The whole idea of the queen of heaven, now the Catholics call Mary the queen of heaven. The queen of heaven was Ashtar and this was Babylonian.

You go back to Jeremiah 7, 18 and Jeremiah 44, 15 through 30, this queen of heaven idea that the Catholics have absorbed started out like many other things, Easter and such. So why is she prominent here? Because of the adultery angle. In Pergamos, the things that are consumed were in view.

And so what is the overcomer promise? The doctrine of Balaam teaching Israel to sin via Balak and eating the foods. You go back and read the account in Numbers 25, they eat. And they fornicate and they are absorbed into this worship of Baal of Peor.

So what is the overcomer promise? When in verse 14, the problem is eating things sacrificed to idols. That's ahead of committing the sexual immorality. Remember the order in Acts 15, you come down here in verse 17, to him who overcomes, I will give what? To eat, not food offered to idols, the hidden manna.

Now, what do you remember about manna? In Exodus chapter 16 and Numbers chapter 11, manna was God's provision for Israel during their wilderness journey. It was called bread from heaven. But if you remember in Numbers 11, the Israelites got tired of it.

It's bread from heaven. It is miraculously provided six days of the week. Remember they had to gather twice as much on Friday because it did not come on Saturday, clearly miraculous.

But the Israelites grew tired of it and they wanted the leeks and garlicks of Egypt. Numbers 11, four through six. Notice again, it isn't just, I don't like the taste of this manna.

It's kind of bland, it's like coriander seed. It's the color of honey and it tastes like coriander. That's bland.

But their rejection of the manna, metaphorically, symbolically, is I liked the tastiness. It was

appealing. It was stimulating when we had the spicier foods of Egypt.

And this steady diet of manna from heaven is tiresome. As the young people like to say, I'm bored of it. We used to say, I'm bored by something.

Now they say, I'm bored of it. They were bored. They wanted to go back to Egypt for the food.

What is the problem in Pergamos and Thyatira? Absorbing the viewpoints of the world. Isn't it more joyful? Isn't it more celebratory? Isn't it big tent embrace? Wasn't Jesus preaching love? So let's just love everybody and let's disregard sin in the camp. We are not going to worry about what's clean or unclean.

We're not gonna worry about what is spotted by the flesh. In Israel, remember, if there was defilement, it had to go outside the camp. It had to be cleansed.

It had to be purified before it could come into the fellowship. Look at Leviticus 14 and we've revisited it many times. The cleansing, the healing of a leper and the procedure by which he could be restored to fellowship.

So manna is divine faithfulness. It is divine provision. It is sustenance in the Israelites case for the physical bodies, but it becomes a spiritual reflection of God's provision for our souls.

And the word of God isn't always gonna knock us back in our chair and cause us to take three and a half pages of notes and wow, I never saw that before. Isn't that something? It's a breakthrough. It's stimulating.

I've got to go tell my friends. I learned something fantastic. Many times we are putting one foot in front of another.

We're reviewing our basic life skills, our faith, our hope, our love, our understanding of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the example of the Lord Jesus Christ in faithfulness and steadiness. It's a narrow road. We've got to concentrate on not stepping off of it.

We've got to examine ourselves to see if we're in the faith. We need to watch for sin and confess it so that the Lord Jesus can cleanse us from all unrighteousness. And we can participate in that new and living way.

We fellowship with the Father. We come before Him. We cast our cares on Him.

We represent ourselves before His throne and we intercede on behalf of each other. We look for opportunities to be used by God, the function of our spiritual gift and so on. That's manna.

Manna is not exciting. Reminds me of Yosemite Sam out on the island and all there are are coconuts and he's got this recipe book, you know, a thousand ways to make coconut. And he throws the book and the coconuts into the ocean.

He needs, he wants to, you know, have some rabbit stew. But unbelief, ingratitude, and the allure of the old life. They were slaves in Egypt, but there were some fun times.

They were enslaved, but they've forgotten the hardship and the cry that God heard in heaven to send Moses to deliver them. God tells Moses, I have heard the cry of my people under hard bondage. This is what they want to go back to.

When we begin to be persuaded that it's a good idea to go back to the ways of the world, to what is accepted in the world, what makes sense to the world, what is fun in the world, and nobody hates on you. You're not rejected. You're not vilified.

You're not talked bad about and canceled and put off. And well, you're holier than thou. And you know, why can't you just go along to get along? We think I would really love to be accepted.

I would love to just, you know, be on good terms with everybody. Who wouldn't? And we forget about the slavery. We forget about the slavery.

We forget about the hard bondage. We forget about the suffering that it entails and the consequences that are inevitable. We forget.

So when Jesus says, as a reward for those who overcome in this situation of not going along to getting along, going along to get along, of compromising and embracing the world with its idolatrous practices, to him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna. He doesn't say the hidden honey or the hidden grapes from the vines of heaven. It's manna.

You have to be someone who has developed a taste and an appreciation and a love for manna. Not everybody likes manna. Number 11, the reward is a reward to those who recognize it and appreciate it and love it and enjoy it as a reward.

And it's hidden manna. It isn't for everyone. It's not revealed to anyone.

But if you have a love for the word of God, if you love to explore the riches of God's grace and mercy, his character, his love, expressed through the Lord Jesus Christ, how did Jesus know to do what he did and to say what he said in his humanity led by the Holy Spirit and with his knowledge of the word of God, just as us? That's the hidden manna. To be privileged, to partake of what others might consider to be bland and uninteresting, and well, who cares about that? It takes a particular kind of individual and it starts with rejecting the emoluments and the seduction of the world. We saw this in Proverbs 2 through 10, the crafty harlot, come on down to my house, baby.

I've got perfume, I've got a soft bed, I've got great food. Come on down, be entertained, be gratified. Self-gratification, I promote myself into the top spot.

Idolatry, everybody kind of figured out that the idol was just a statue, but I become the God that I worship, makes me feel good. So that is the nature of the reward because the Lord Jesus

himself, remember he in John chapter six, verses 31 through 35, your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness and they died. I am the bread of life.

The hidden manna partakes of Jesus Christ himself. This is where the notion that is embodied in transubstantiation comes into play. Many were horrified in John six.

You got to eat my flesh and drink my blood, Jesus says. That's horrifying. And many turned back from following him because they couldn't understand that he wasn't speaking in physical terms.

The hidden man is not for everyone. Partaking of the body, the life, the thinking and actions that are powered by the spirit and informed by the word, that's his body. We are his body and we don't eat each other.

We are imbibing and reflecting the body of Christ. He is the living bread from heaven. He is the hidden manna.

What a wonderful reward. But you see what it takes to qualify for it. You have to have a taste for that bread, not for the food associated with the world and idolatry.

Same thing here in Thyatira. Look at the reward. Verse 24, I say to you and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, this doctrine of Jezebel, she's going to be thrown into a bed of suffering.

She's going to go into great tribulation. Who have not known the depths of Satan. The depths of Satan is bathos, bathos.

You know, a bathysphere is one of these things you can go way down in the depths of the ocean. Who have not known the bathos of Satan, I will put on you no other burden. This is baros, most familiar to us as barometer.

It's a pressure meter. I will put no other pressure on you. If you've not known the depths, you go into the depths, there's a lot of pressure down there and it's hard to recover.

You know what happens to divers who come up too soon? You get that nitrogen boiling out of your blood. Those who have not known the depths, the bathos of Satan, I will put no other baros on you. No other pressure.

Hold fast what you have till I come. Just hold fast. He overcomes and keeps my works until the end.

Your later works are better than the beginning in Thyatira. You got to keep on. Don't rest on your laurels.

Don't coast now. Keep my works until the end. To him, I will give power over the nations.

Jezebel and Balaam exercised worldly power that perverted and corrupted the Israelites so that they could not enjoy God's blessings. Instead of being overpowered by the world, Jesus says, I will give you power over the nations. You will rule with me with a rod of iron.

You will discipline and judge those who need to be dashed in pieces so their case no longer holds water, if you will. Just as I've received from my father and I will give him the morning star. Lots to say about the morning star and we'll see it next time.

But how important is it for us to identify the doctrine of Balaam and the teaching of Jezebel and those who hold it and separate from those people? Everything is on the line. Do you love the manna from heaven? Do you love the bread of life, the Lord Jesus? Do you want to participate with him? You never learn, other than marriage, the best way to get to know somebody is to work with them. We'll work with the Lord Jesus on a daily basis, ruling the nations.

What a privilege. More to come. We'll see you this Wednesday night.

We'll close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the truth of your word. Thank you for the powerful way it communicates to us and in the hands of your Holy Spirit can transform us and renew us in our minds so that we will understand your good and acceptable and perfect will.

We pray that that will take place, that we will be bright and shining reflections of your glory and worthy to represent the Lord Jesus in this life and the life to come. We ask it in Jesus' name, amen.