

Letter to Pergamum (vv. 12-17)

The Address (v.12)

VERSE 12 "And to the messenger of the church in Pergamum write (Καὶ τῷ ἀγγέλῳ τῆς ἐν Περγάμῳ ἐκκλησίας γράψον· [*conj and + art.w/noun dat.m.s. angelos messenger + art.w/noun gen.f.s. ekklesia church + prep en + noun dat.f.s. Pergamos*]): **The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this** [Τάδε λέγει ὁ ἔχων τὴν ῥομφαίαν τὴν δίστομον τὴν ὀξεῖαν· [*demonstr.pro.acc.nt.p. hede this; literally "these things"; pronoun is the direct object of the verb lego + pres.act.ind.3s. lego say; "says this" should be, "says these things" + art.w/pres.act.part.nom.m.s. echo has (subject of the verb lego) + art.w/noun acc.f.s. hromphaia large broad sword + art.w/adj.acc.f.s. distomos lit., having two mouths, of a sword: double-edged + art.w/adj.acc.f.s. oxus sharp (of things); swift (of time)*]):

ANALYSIS: VERSE 12

1. The standard address this time uses the name *Pergamo*.
2. The road north from Smyrna follows the coastline some forty miles and then turns inland in a northeasterly direction up the valley of the Caicus River.
3. About ten miles inland from the Aegean Sea stood the impressive capital city of Pergamum.
4. Pliny called Pergamum "by far the most distinguished city in Asia."
5. Built on a cone-shaped hill a thousand feet in height, it dominated the surrounding valley of the Caius.
6. The name is related to the Greek *πυργος*, which means "citadel," (e.g., "acropolis") signifying that which is lofty and impregnable.
7. The city rose to prominence in the third century BC, when it became capital of the Attalid rulers.
8. Under Eumenes II (197-159 BC) Pergamum became "the finest flower of civilization."
9. It boasted a library of more than 200,000 volumes.
10. Legend has it that parchment was invented there when the supply of papyrus from Egypt was cut off in reprisal for Eumenes's attempt to lure a famous librarian by the name of Aristophanes away from Alexandria.
11. Until Attalus II bequeathed his kingdom to Rome in 133 BC, the Pergamum kings continued as enthusiastic patrons of Hellenistic culture.
12. The most spectacular aspect of the city was the upper terrace of the citadel with its sacred and royal buildings.
13. Of these, the most remarkable was the great altar of Zeus that jutted out near the top of the mountain.
14. A famous frieze around the base of the altar depicts the gods of Greece in victorious combat against the giants of the earth (symbolizing the triumph of civilization over barbarism).
15. It commemorates the victory of Attalus I (the first ruler in Asia refused tribute to the plundering Gauls) over the Galatians.
16. Religion flourished in Pergamum.

17. It was the center of worship for four of the most important pagan cults of the day — Zeus (Soter), Athena (the patron goddess), Dionysos (god of the royal family, and had the mystical name “Bull”), and Asklepios (god of healing).
18. Zeus and Athena were testimonials to the Greek spirit and influence; while the other two were gods reflecting an Anatolian spirit.
19. The shrine of Asklepios, the god of healing (also known as “the Pergamene god”), attracted people from all over the ancient world.
20. Asklepios, like Dionysus more of an animal-god, was associated with serpents.
21. Feeding a living serpent in the temple was the manner of practicing this worship.
22. The sick would spend the night in the darkness of the temple where nonpoisonous snakes were allowed to roam.
23. If a person was touched by one of these snakes (i.e., by the god himself), he was cured of his illness.
24. Galen, one of the most famous physicians of the ancient world, was a native of Pergamum and studied there.
25. The city was full of altars, temples and sacred groves.
26. Pergamum was the first in Asia to have a temple dedicated to the worship of a living ruler.
27. In 29 BC Augustus granted permission for a temple to be erected in Pergamum to “the divine Augustus and goddess Roma.”
28. Of all the seven cities, Pergamum was the one in which the church was most liable to clash with the imperial cult.
29. Pergamum was the official capital of Roman Asia for two and a half centuries.
30. At the time of writing (95 AD) the city’s authority extended over a wide territory.
31. Its modern counterpart Bergama is but a shadow of the city’s ancient glory (has fifteen Turkish mosques).
32. In confronting the Pergamum congregation, divided by false teachings and practices, the risen Lord presents Himself as one who is ready to fight against those who hold to the ways of the Balaamites and the Nioclaitans (v. 16).
33. It is of interest that Pergamum was a city to which Rome had given the rare power of capital punishment (*ius gadii*), which was symbolized by a sword.
34. The believers in Pergamum were reminded that though they lived under the rule of almost unlimited *imperium*, they were citizens of another kingdom—that of Him who needs no other sword than that of His spoken word.
35. “The One having (e.g., wielding) the sharp two-edged sword” is the subject of the verb “says.”
36. And what He says, to the church at Pergamum (vv. 13-17), was to be taken with the utmost alarm.
37. The implication is this: Someone who wields this formidable weapon is to be feared, especially when He threatens to make a visit (v.16).
38. This is the implication of the introduction of the risen Lord to this church.
39. The sharp two-edged broadsword is as symbol of Christ’s omnipotence, and it has far reaching significance beyond the church in Pergamum.
40. This also suggests that the one who holds the ultimate power over life and death is God.
41. This reality alone should generate fear and repentance among the churches.

Knowledge About the People (v.13)

VERSE 13 'I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is (Οἶδα ποῦ κατοικεῖς, ὅπου ὁ θρόνος τοῦ Σατανᾶ, [*perf.act.ind.1s. oida know + adv pou where + pres.act.ind.2s. katoikeo dwell, settle down + adv pou where + art.w/noun nom.m.s. thronos throne + art.w/noun gen.m.s. Satanas Satan; lit., "the Adversary*]; **and you hold fast My name** [καὶ κρατεῖς τὸ ὄνομά μου [*conj kai and + pres.act.ind.2s. krates hold fast + art.w/noun acc.nt.s. onoma name + pro.gen.1s. ego "My"*]], **and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells** [καὶ οὐκ ἠρνήσω τὴν πίστιν μου καὶ ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις Ἀντιπᾶς ὁ μάρτυς μου ὁ πιστός μου, ὃς ἀπεκτάνθη παρ' ὑμῖν, ὅπου ὁ Σατανᾶς κατοικεῖ. [*conj kai and + neg ouk not + aor.dep.ind.2s. arneomai deny + art.w/noun acc.f.s pistis faith (content) + pro.gen.1s. ego "My" + conj kai ascensive- even + prep en + art.w/noun loc.f.p. hemera day + proper name Antipas + art.w/noun nom.m.s. martus witness + pro.gen.1s. ego "My" + art.w/adj.nom.m.s. pistos faithful + pro.gen.1s. ego "My" + rel.pro. hos who + aor.pass.ind.3s. apokteinow kill + prep para + pro.dat.2p. su you + adv hopou where + art.w/noun nom.m.s. Satanas Satan + pres.act.ind.3s. katoikeo dwell*]).

ANALYSIS: VERSE 13

1. The letter to Pergamum begins with an acknowledgment of the difficulty of living in an environment so distinctly pagan and a commendation for the church's faithful witness in the face of severe opposition.
2. The Lord knows where they live (*katoikeo* suggests permanent residency); is "where Satan's throne is."
3. A variety of suggestions have been put forward to explain the phrase, "where Satan's throne is."
4. Frequent mention has been made of the impressive throne-like altar of Zeus that overlooked the city.
5. Others apply the phrase to the cult of Asklepios, who was designated Savior and whose symbol was the serpent (this would obviously remind Christians of Satan; cf. 12:9; 20:2).
6. Since other cities possessed these same cults and features it seems best to look in another direction.
7. The expression is best understood, however, in connection with the prominence of Pergamum as the official cult center of emperor worship in Asia.
8. In addition to the erection of the temple of Augustus in 29 BC, as second temple was built in the time of Trajan when the city acquired the title "twice *neokoros* (temple warden)".
9. It was here that Satan had established his official seat or chair.
10. As Rome had become the center of Satan's activity in the West, so Pergamum had become his "throne" in the East.
11. A special priesthood was devoted to Caesar's worship.
12. Throughout the Revelation the specter of ruler-adoration is in the background.

13. Failure to comply with this category of cult in the Tribulation will cost millions their lives.
14. This Caesar-worship was the greatest menace of the church in this city.
15. The third item detailing Christ's knowledge of this people concerns their faithfulness.
16. Under adverse circumstances the members had not denied their faith by yielding to the pressure to burn incense to the emperor and declaring "Caesar is lord."
17. Not even in the days of Antipas, who was put to death in their city, did they sully their faith.
18. Christ commends the believers there for not denying the faith, during a particularly difficult time, when they were being pressured from the local authorities to worship Caesar.
19. They steadfastly refused to engage in emperor-worship.
20. The present indicative "you hold fast My name" refers to their current posture with respect to the cult of Caesar.
21. "My name" refers to who and what Jesus Christ is.
22. The church is commended for their stance with respect to who and what Jesus is.
23. They were duly recognized as those who continued to hold fast to their identity as Christians.
24. The 2nd verb in the commendation— "you did not deny My faith"— is an aorist indicative, and refers to a time in their recent past, when one of their own was martyred.
25. In the days of this martyr the church stood firm, and steadfastly refused to deny their faith in Christ, even on the pain of death.
26. Faith is here used in the active sense of trust in the Lord.
27. It is a phase 2 perpetuation of what began at the point of saving faith.
28. To deny Christ in this case would be to publicly renounce Him.
29. Instead, they held fast to their faith (saving) in Him.
30. They proved themselves to be faithful to their original calling.
31. The killing of Antipas by the local authorities was designed to turn the church away from the faith.
32. Tradition says Antipas was roasted to death in a brazen bull during the reign of Domitian.
33. Antipas' martyrdom earned him the title "My witness, My faithful one."
34. This august title he shared with Christ (Rev. 1:5).
35. Polycarp, a few years later, in this same city, refused to curse Christ, and was killed.
36. The term martyr is taken from the Greek μαρτυρ.
37. By the 3rd century AD, *martus* had developed the meaning *martyr* because so many had sealed their testimony by giving up their lives rather than deny their faith.
38. Stephen is the first Christian martyr (Acts 22:20 'And when the blood of Your witness Stephen was being shed, I also was standing by approving, and watching out for the coats of those who were killing him.').
39. This technical usage of the noun did not come into vogue until later.
40. It is possible that John captures this sense here, though this sense was not in use elsewhere.
41. This verse concludes with a repeated emphasis on Pergamum as the place "where Satan dwells."
42. A contrast is intended with the opening clause "I know where you dwell."
43. The present active indicative of the verb *katoikeo* is used in both clauses.
44. The verb means to settle in as a permanent resident of a place.
45. Since both Satan and believers bore a special relationship to the place, there is little wonder that conflict and martyrdom would exist in Pergamum.

Condemnation (vv.14-15)

VERSE 14 'But I have a few things against you (ἀλλ' ἔχω κατὰ σοῦ ὀλίγα [*conj alla but* + *pres.act.ind.1s. echo have* + *prep kata against* + *pro.gen.2s. su* + *adj.acc.nt.p. oligos small, few; here of quantity; "few things"*]), **because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam** [ὅτι ἔχεις ἐκεῖ κρατοῦντας τὴν διδαχὴν Βαλαάμ, [*conj hoti because* + *pres.act.ind.2s. echo have* + *adv ekei there* + *pres.act.part.acc.m.p. krateo hold* + *art.w/noun acc.f.s. didache teaching, doctrine* + *noun gen.m.s. Balaam*]), **who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel** [ὃς ἐδίδασκεν τῷ Βαλάκ βαλεῖν σκάνδαλον ἐνώπιον τῶν υἱῶν Ἰσραήλ [*rel.pro.nom.m.s hos who* + *impf.act.ind.3s. didasko teach* + *art.w/dat.m.s. Balak; this dative is probably a colloquialism with the verb didasko; this verb governs the dative twice in Plutarch; it is not unnatural to conceive of the teaching being to or for a person, necessitating a dative case of indirect object for the person* + *aor.act.infin. ballo throw; "to put"* + *noun acc.nt.s. skandalon stumbling block; here a syn for temptation* + *prep enopion before* + *art.w/noun gen.m.p. huios son* + *noun gen.m.s. Israel*]), **to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality** [φαγεῖν εἰδωλόθυτα καὶ πορνεῦσαι. [*aor.act.infin. esthio eat* + *adj.acc.nt.p. eidolothutos sacrificed to an idol* + *conj and* + *aor.act.infin. porneuo commit fornication*]).

VERSE 15 So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans (οὕτως ἔχεις καὶ σὺ κρατοῦντας τὴν διδαχὴν [τῶν] Νικολαϊτῶν ὁμοίως. [*adv houtos in this manner; "So"* + *pres.act.ind.2s. echo have* + *conj kai adjunctive* + *pro.nom.2s. su you* + *pres.act.part.acc.m.p. krateo hold* + *art.w/noun acc.f.s. didache teaching* + *art.w/noun gen.m.p. Nikolaitan* + *adv homoios in the same way*]).

ANALYSIS: VERSES 14-15

1. As in the message to Ephesus (2:4) and Thyatira (2:20) the strong adversative *alla* ("But") introduces a strong criticism against this church.
2. The complaint stands in sharp contrast to the commendation of standing fast in the face of persecution.
3. Though few numerically, the matters were not trivial.
4. One view is that the plural of *oligos* ("a few things") refers generically to only one thing.
5. The plural is explained as a word of comparison with the far greater number of approved things that remained (Alford).
6. The singular *oligon* ("small"), it is said, would not have indicated objective fewness, but rather subjective unimportance of the grounds of complaint.
7. At times the plural has such a generic use as this.

8. The one ground of criticism against the church is its indifference to those who held the teaching of Balaam and that of the Nicolaitans, probably an indifference that arose from contempt of fear rather than ignorance (Mofatt).
9. Because the following context proceeds to reduce the “few things” to one by identifying those holding the teaching of Balaam with those embracing that of the Nicolaitans, the basis for the complaint is singular (Beasley-Murray).
10. Yet this is not the whole story.
11. It is true that the root problem may have been indifference, but the speaker does not cite the root problem.
12. He cites the presence of this group and then the presence of that group (Scott).
13. Two groups explain the plural.
14. If the teaching of the Nicolaitans were identical with that of the Balaamites, this could have been expressed more clearly.
15. Since the church tolerated two classes of heretics, the better course is to take the plural *oligia* in its normal plural sense as referring to more than one ground of complaint.
16. The adverb *ekei* (“there”) designates the same place as *par humin* (“among you”) and the two *hopou* (“where”) clauses of verse 13.
17. Because Pergamum has just been noted as the death-site of Antipas, special attention is drawn to the locality again.
18. “You have there” shows that the persons whose presence was being tolerated were not teaching from a distance as at Ephesus (2:2), but members of the local congregation of the city.
19. While the congregation as a whole was commended to “holding fast” to the name of Jesus (2:13), it is condemned for tolerating some of their number who were “holding fast” (2:14,15) to the teaching of Balaam and the Nicolaitans.
20. The fault of the church as a whole was not adherence to the teaching of Balaam, but rather indifference to those within who were in sympathy to it.
21. “Balaam” is derived from the two Hebrew words *bala* (“he swallows”) and *am* (“people”).
22. According to the derivative meanings of the names, the two groups troubling the church were “swallowers of the people” (i.e., the Balaamites) and “conquerors of the people” (i.e., the Nicolaitans).
23. In Numbers 24 Balaam persistently refused the request of Balak, king of Moab, to curse Israel.
24. In the account of Israel’s seduction to worship Baal in Num.25 no mention is made of Balaam’s agency in causing this defection.
25. Nevertheless, according to Num.31:16, he had apparently advised Balak that Israel would forfeit God’s protection if he could induce them to engage in idolatry, which he did.
26. Balaam bears more guilt than King Balak.
27. As a prophet of God, he betrayed his calling and is viewed as the real culprit in the incident that cost 24,000 Jews their lives.
28. The desire for monetary gain was the motive for Balaam to do Balak’s bidding.
29. Monetary gain at the expense of integrity in handling the truth is “the way of Balaam” (2Pet.2:15) or “the error of Balaam” (Jude 11).
30. Here we have “the teaching of Balaam.”
31. It is simply to teach believers that it is all right to participate in false religious practices in the name of freedom in Christ.

32. These “Balaamites” in Pergamum encouraged others to relax their principles.
33. The trap at Baal-Peor was the sudden appearance of Moabite women in the camp of Israel.
34. Balaam advised Balak that this would make Israel vulnerable to defeat by her enemies.
35. Balaam’s clever notion was to break down Israel’s power by an indirect attack on their morale.
36. Pagan food and pagan women were his powerful tools against the rigidity of the Mosaic Law.
37. The Moabite women brought their bodies and their gods over to the Jews, and the rest is history.
38. Temptation was dangled in the face of the Jewish male STA.
39. Actually, the word “stumbling block” here carries the metaphorical meaning of “temptation.”
40. Or, the occasion of one’s sin.
41. The victims were “the sons of Israel,” and the women of Moab were the bait (Num.25:1,2), and the plan worked.
42. The two infinitives “to eat” and “to commit fornication” are expegetic in explanation of *skandalon* (“stumbling block”).
43. The order of Num.25:1,2 is reversed.
44. There fornication preceded and led to idolatry, the same order as indicated in the related problem at Thyatira (cf. Rev.2:20).
45. In Pergamum, however, idolatrous practices seem to have come first.
46. The associated sins of participation in pagan feasts with their attendant sexual immorality were so characteristic of the culture of ancient Asia Minor.
47. Civic and religious life was intertwined.
48. The content of the doctrine or advocacy of certain individuals within the church was that it was okay to eat meat sacrificed to idols, which in turn led to believers participating in pagan festivals, which in turn led to immorality.
49. The Balaamites took things well beyond Paul’s teaching on eating meat sacrificed to idols (1Cor.8:1ff.).
50. Partying with the cosmos in the name of freedom in Christ is not what Paul had in mind.
51. Those in Pergamum under the Balaamite influence were in direct violation of the edict of the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15, which forbid idolatrous practices and fornication.
52. What this approach amounts to is catering to the STA and its lusts.
53. All in the name of freedom in Christ.
54. Taken to its logical conclusion, it turns the CWL on its head.
55. We are supposed to separate ourselves from the excesses and sensuality of the cosmos.
56. The things they do to are a part of “the unfruitful works of darkness” (Eph.5:11 “Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them ;”).
57. The sect of the Nicolaitans were rebuffed at Ephesus (2:6), but were tolerated at Pergamum.
58. The Balaamite teaching was basically antinomian in spirit, while the Nicolaitan approach elevated legalism and sacerdotalism (religious belief emphasizing the powers of clergy/priests as essential mediators over the people/laity).
59. Others see the Nicolaitans as another version of the Balaamites (e.g., the liberal Gnostic approach relative to the spirit and the flesh).
60. In this case both groups advocate an accommodation with pagan culture.

61. The church at Pergamum represents church history from Constantine (c. 320 AD) to Gregory the Great (c. 590 AD; considered the 1st Pope).
62. This era was one of compromise and affiliation with the State.
63. The church compromised and embraced forms of pagan idolatry and ritual.
64. This era followed a period in which the church universal was persecuted (Smyrna).

The Threat (v. 16)

VERSE 16 **'Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly** (μετανοήσον οὖν· εἰ δὲ μή, ἔρχομαί σοι ταχύ [*aor.act.imper.2s. metanoeo repent, change one's men + inferen.conj. oun therefore + conj ei if + conj de and, but + neg me; these three particles = "or else" + pres.dep.ind.1s. erchomai come + pro.dat.2s. su + adv tachy quickly or without (unnecessary) delay*], **and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth** [*καὶ πολεμήσω μετ' αὐτῶν ἐν τῇ ῥομφαίᾳ τοῦ στόματός μου. [conj and + fut.act.ind.1s. polumeo make war + prep meta with, against + pro.gen.m.3p. autos "them" + prep en "with" + art.w/noun instr.f.s. hrompahia broad sword + art.w/noun gen.nt.s. stoma mouth + pro.gen.1s. ego "My"]*).

ANALYSIS: VERSE 16

1. "Therefore repent" is directed to the entire church.
2. Three distinct groups of individuals are involved.
3. First, there were the false teachers of either the Balaamite or Nicolaitan persuasions.
4. This group corresponds to Balaam and Balak.
5. Second, there were those within the assemble who had participated in the things espoused by these sects.
6. They correspond to the male Israelites who engaged in immorality and idolatry with the Moabite women.
7. Third, there are those who merely tolerated the presence of evil among the membership.
8. All three groups were guilty of sin, and all three are called upon to "repent, or else."
9. The words "I am coming to you quickly (or "soon") should be understood as a coming "against" the congregation in judgment, as in 2:5, and not as a reference to the 2nd Advent.
10. The change of pronouns from *soi* ("to you") to *auton* (against them") should not be taken as a threat leveled against only those who hold heretical teaching.
11. If only those who were actively involved in the practices of these sects were the subjects of the threat of the Lord's wrath, then why would the others need to repent?
12. The whole church is guilty as per verse 16.
13. And the whole church needs to repent or else face Christ's wrath.
14. The change from a singular to a plural pronoun and from a second to a third person is a Hebraism that is common to the LXX.
15. The two pronouns refer to the same group (i.e., the whole church).
16. Pergamum failed to do what Ephesus did, and that was to try and expel unsavory types from membership and assembly.
17. If the church does not heed the word of His mouth, that word will become a sword to fight against the corrupt.

18. This means that the sin unto death awaits those who do not repent and act accordingly.
19. Those who do not repent after hearing this letter were to be expelled by the majority.
20. The church was to cleanse itself from those it had tolerated.
21. It is unreasonable to suppose that all would take this threat to heart.
22. In Balaam's case a literal sword took his life in battle (Num. 31:8).
23. God's ability to unleash judgment upon an individual, a group of individuals, a nation, or even the entire world is unrestricted.
24. Judgment surely fell upon those who persisted in their evil, even in the face of a direct warning from Jesus Christ.

Promise to the Overcomer (v. 17)

VERSE 17 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches

(ὁ ἔχων οὖς ἀκουσάτω τί τὸ πνεῦμα λέγει ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις. [*art.w/pres.act.part.nom.m.s. echo have + noun acc.nt.s. ous ear + aor.act.imper.3s. akouo hear + pro.indef.acc.nt.s. tis what + art.w/noun nom.nt.s. pneuma spirit + pres.act.ind.3s. lego say + art.w/noun dat.f.p. ekklesia church*]).

To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna (τῷ νικῶντι δώσω αὐτῷ τοῦ μάννα τοῦ κεκρυμμένου [*art.w/pres.act.part.dat.m.s. nikao + fut.act.ind.1s. didomi give + pro.dat.m.s. autos him + art.w/noun gen.nt.s. masna food God gave to Israelites in the wilderness; symbolizes BD + art.w/perf.pass.part.gen.nt.s. krupto hide; "hidden"*]), **and I will give him a white stone** [καὶ δώσω αὐτῷ ψῆφον λευκὴν, [*conj and + fut.act.ind.1s. didomi give + pro.dat.m.3s. autos him + noun acc.f.s. pshphon pebble; as a means of casting a ballot as in Acts 26:10; otherwise only here + adj.acc.f.s. leukos white*]], **and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it** [καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν ψῆφον ὄνομα καινὸν γεγραμμένον ὃ οὐδεὶς οἶδεν εἰ μὴ ὁ λαμβάνων. [*conj kai + prep epi upon + art.w/noun acc.f.s. pshphos stone + noun acc.nt.s. onoma name + adj.acc.nt.s. kainos new (quality) + perf.pass.part.acc.nt. grapho write + rel.pro.acc.nt. ho which + pro.nom.m.s. oudeis no one + perf.act.ind.3s. oida know + part ei if + neg me; ei me = "except" + art.w/pres.act.part.nom.m.s. lambano receive*]].¹

ANALYSIS: VERSE 17

1. The command to heed the spiritual lessons associated with the church at Pergamum is applied to all local churches as with the first two letters (2:7, 11).
2. While Christ was the speaker, God the Holy Spirit is the One who revealed the information to John and to the believers in these seven churches and beyond.
3. The Spirit speaks not in audible words but through a supernatural process whereby the listener is able to understand what the duly authorized messenger is communicating.

4. The ear in this expression is more than just the physical attributes that make hearing possible.
5. There are many who have perfectly good ears but who cannot hear what the Spirit says (cf. Isa.43:8 “Bring out the people who are blind, even though they have eyes, and the deaf, even though they have ears.”).
6. “He,” then, “who has an ear” is someone who is equipped to handle divine viewpoint under face to face teaching.
7. The unbeliever cannot handle divine viewpoint (cf. 1Cor.2:10-16).
8. Only a believer can comprehend divine viewpoint.
9. In order for that to happen the individual believer must be in fellowship and intellectually honest.
10. The promise of this verse is “to him who overcomes.”
11. See 1Jn.5:4,5: “For whatever is born of God overcomes (pres.act.ind. *nikao*) the world; and this is the victory (*he nika*) that has overcome the world - - our faith. Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.”
12. The verb form used in chapters two and three is a present active participle (two datives and five nominatives) of νικᾶω.
13. Saving faith brings Ph 1 victory.
14. The promise to the overcomer (believers at Pergamum and elsewhere) includes three difficult symbols: “hidden manna,” “a white stone,” and “a new name.”
15. All of the promises to the overcomers are Ph3 realities (cf. 2:7, 11, 26; 3:5, 12, 21), and so is this one.
16. Here, and with the promise to Ephesus, eating something is involved (2:7).
17. Since GAP (which involves faith) is not an issue in Ph3, the eating here is literal as it is in connection with the fruit of the tree of life in 2:7.
18. Manna is the comical name that was given to the supernatural bread or food provided for the Jews during the forty years in the wilderness (Ps.78:24 “He rained down manna upon them to eat, and gave them food from heaven”).
19. In the Hebrew the term means “What is it?”
20. The name comes from the Israelites dull-headed response to their first encounter with it (remember Moses briefed them regarding it on the eve of its appearance; Ex.16).
21. Manna was not only the perfect food, in that it had all the nutritional ingredients found in all food groups, and was convenient to prepare, it represents our spiritual food or Bible doctrine (cf. 1Cor.10:3 “and all ate the same spiritual food;”).
22. The expression “hidden manna” is reminiscent of the manna hidden in the Ark of the Covenant by Moses (Ex. 16:33-34; Heb.9:4).
23. Jewish tradition claims that Jeremiah hid the Ark before the destruction of Jerusalem, and it will not be recovered until Israel is restored in the future (2 Macc.2:5ff; Apoc. Bar. 7:7-9; 19:8).
24. Rev.11:19 notes the location of the heavenly Ark of which the earthly Ark is a representation (cf. Heb. 8:5; 9:24).
25. The symbolism of the preserved manna in the pot within the Ark of the Covenant tells us that in Christ is all wisdom and knowledge.
26. Or, Bible doctrine resides in His person.
27. Jesus as a man was full of grace and truth (Jn.1:14).
28. Jesus Christ is both the truth and the source of truth (BD).

29. It is of interest to note that the Jews were still eating manna as their daily bread when they fell into Balaam's trap (cf. v.14).
30. This "hidden manna" is actual food and serves as a contrast with the food at the banquets of the pagans in Pergamum.
31. This suggests that there will be a kind of bread that will be served to believers in Ph3.
32. We know that there will be a continual banquet in Jerusalem during the millennial kingdom (Isa. 25:6).
33. The "hidden manna" may have something to do with the recovered Ark of the Covenant and the manna hidden within.
34. It may be multiplied so that all overcomers might partake of it.
35. This would symbolize saving faith as in the communion bread.
36. In any case, this is a blessing reserved for believers in resurrection.
37. In Greco-Roman times a white stone was given to victors at athletic events enabling them to admission to special feasts.
38. The white stone had a name engraved upon it.
39. The white stone is a personalized *tessera* (a small tablet used by Romans as a ticket or voucher as a means of identification), which would serve as a token of admission to the great Messianic feast.
40. The "hidden manna," another aspect of the reward for Ph1 victory, suggests a Messianic feast.
41. Admittedly, limited information about ancient customs makes identification of the white stone difficult, but repeated contextual reminders about the future Messianic feast make this the most probable of a number of proposals to date.
42. The "new name" inscribed on the white stone is one that is qualitatively new, not one that is recent.
43. The adjective *kainon* does not mean new in contrast to what is old, but something that is different in nature.
44. The secretive nature of the new name is against it belonging to Christ or God.
45. This view is supported by 3:12, but there three names not one is in view there.
46. Jesus Christ will have such a name (Rev.19:12) that only He will know.
47. So, all believers will have a special name that he and no one else will know!
48. Again, these three blessings are reserved for all who are believers.
49. Ph3 blessing is enhanced for those who are faithful to death.