

"Hidden Manna: Pergamum"

(Rev 2:14-17)



Truth Matters Church, Inc.

Exposit 2:14



14 But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality.

- ✧ After just commending them for not denying His Name despite the intense persecution, Jesus found a few things against them
- ✧ Some held to the teaching of Balaam and Balak
- ✧ The account of Balaam/Balak is recorded in Numbers 22-24
- ✧ This account of Balaam/Balak was shortly after the bronze serpent account (Num 21) where God was leading His people Israel through the wilderness and to the Promised Land

Exposit 2:14



BRIEF OVERVIEW:

- ❧ Balak was king of Moab and Balaam was a pagan prophet
- ❧ Balak paid Balaam to curse Israel so that they will not de-possess them, kill them and take over their land
- ❧ God commanded Balaam not to curse Israel
 - ❧ Despite Balak's numerous attempts, Balaam could not go against God's command
- ❧ God permitted Balaam to return to Moab with Balak's company
 - ❧ Where we get the Balaam and donkey account
 - ❧ NOTE: God spoke through a donkey; and the donkey saw the angel of the LORD before Balaam's eyes were opened to see the angel w/ drawn sword in hand
- ❧ Balaam's life was spared, but he was only to speak the words given by God

Exposit 2:14



- ❧ When Balak and Balaam finally connected, they proceeded to set up altars and offer up sacrifices
- ❧ Instead of cursing Israel, Balaam blessed them
- ❧ This happened 3x times
 - ❧ NOTE: I believe during the 3rd time, Balaam was regenerated
- ❧ Anyhow, this is the brief summary of the account of Balak and Balaam in Numbers 22-24 leading up to Israel's sin that Jesus references in v. 14
- ❧ And that's in the Num 25 ("the Sin of Peor") account
- ❧ Before Israel overtook the Moabites, they played harlot and sacrificed to their gods, Baal worship
 - ❧ They even invited the Moabites to join them in sacrifice

Exposit 2:14



- ✧ Well in the Sin of Peor account, God was angry against Israel and instructed Moses to take all the leaders and execute them
- ✧ Those who engaged in the worship of Baal were slain in broad daylight
- ✧ Scripture tells us 24k Israelites were killed that day

- ✧ Now back to v. 14

Exposit 2:14



14 But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality.

- ✧ So although the believers in Pergamum were faithful even in the face of severe persecution (in the days of Antipas), some of them held to the teachings of Balaam and Balak and participated in Baal worship:
 - ✧ Burnt offerings
 - ✧ Eating of the sacrifice
 - ✧ Engaging in acts of immorality
- ✧ Not only that, there were some among them who held other teachings v15

Exposit 2:15



15 So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

- ❧ I touched on the teaching of the Nicolaitans in the letter to Ephesus
- ❧ What we learned from that study concerning the Nicolaitans was
 - ❧ Scripture did not give us much to work with, but
 - ❧ The fact that it was associated with the teachings of Balak and Balaam (burnt offerings; eating of sacrifice; sexual immorality) in this letter to Pergamum we deduced that the teachings of the Nicolaitans held to similar beliefs
- ❧ SIDE NOTE: This is why historical backgrounds is very important. We learned and are continuing to learn that this part of the world was entrenched in the worship of many different kinds of deities, philosophies, and idol worship over the different epochs of time

Exposit 2:15



- ❧ So during the 1st century, there was a plethora of religions and beliefs, including, temples and shrines to:
 - ❧ Olympian gods and goddesses
 - ❧ Deification of kings and Emperors
 - ❧ The remnant of Baal worship (teaching of Balak and Balaam)
 - ❧ The Nicolaitans
 - ❧ Ephesus hated the teachings of the Nicolaitans
 - ❧ Some in Pergamum embraced the teachings of the Nicolaitans
- ❧ The believers in Pergamum was living in this kind of world and their faith was challenged and tested and contested from different angles
- ❧ Although Jesus died for all their sins, He does NOT give them a free pass

Exposit 2:16



16 Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth.

☞ “Therefore repent” is a command

☞ Jesus is not asking for them to repent, He is commanding them to repent

☞ TRUTH: Christianity and the gospel as we know it today is so watered down that the command for continued repentance is neglected or not taught at all

☞ Just because we’re a Christian and Jesus died for all our sins, does not give us a free pass to sin (hence the words of Paul, shall I go on to sin so that grace may abound?)

☞ The believers in Pergamum who held to the teachings of Balak/Balaam/Nicolaitans were commanded to repent or else He says...

Exposit 2:16



16 ...I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth.

☞ “I am coming to you quickly” [more on this]

☞ “I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth” [more on this]

“I am coming to you quickly”



Let's employ our ROEs:

- ❧ “I am” Jesus is speaking of Himself
- ❧ Is “coming” (erchomai) will come and pay a visit
- ❧ “you” the believers in Pergamum who will not repent and forsake the teachings of Balak/Balaam/Baal/Nicolaitans
- ❧ “quickly” (tachy) soon afterward and
- ❧ “I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth”
 - ❧ “them” are those in Pergamum who refuse to repent
 - ❧ “sword of My mouth” [Jesus was speak and pronounce judgment and it will result in bloodshed]

“I am coming to you quickly”



TRUTH IN CONTEXT:

Using our ROEs: the Scripture means what it says! If the believers in Pergamum who held to the teachings of Balak/Balaam/Baal/Nicolaitans do not repent: Jesus Himself will pay a visit in judgment very soon!

- ✧ God did this to the Israelites when they sinned in Peor (24K died that day), Jesus Himself will do this to the unrepentant in Pergamum
- ✧ Jesus will speak judgment upon them and slay them with the sword of His mouth (it will play itself out in bloodshed)

UNIVERSAL TRUTH: Those entrenched in idol worship who refuse to repent will be slain by the Lord Jesus and by the sword of His mouth!

- ✧ Like I said before: JESUS IS NO JOKE

Exposit 2:17



17 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.'

- ☞ "He who has an ear" is how each letter ends
- ☞ As mentioned before, this echoes Isaiah warning and call to repentance
- ☞ This isn't just a fancy phrase, this too is a command to heed to the Word of God, or else
- ☞ All who hear the proclamation of the gospel are to adhere to it – or else
- ☞ To those who overcome, Jesus promises them "hidden manna" and a "white stone" [more on this]

“hidden manna”



- ✧ We're all familiar with the manna account in the OT
- ✧ After God through Moses led the people out of bondage and was leading them through the wilderness to the promise land, God rained down manna from heaven to feed them (and also provided meat)
- ✧ Manna was described as white, coriander seed and tastes like wafers with honey
- ✧ Well that's the manna in the OT
- ✧ What's the “hidden manna” here in this letter to the NT? Also what does Jesus mean when He goes on to say He will give a “white stone and a new name written on it which no one knows” - except him who receives it
 - ✧ White stone is not mentioned in the OT. Only 1x in the NT, here in this letter.

“hidden manna” & “white stone”



- ❧ So what is Jesus communicating by these two things?
- ❧ Most teachings out there suggest that this is symbolism of keeping oneself pure from an adulterous and perverse generation
 - ❧ Or some variation of this
 - ❧ Basically spiritualizing the text with a spiritual truth
- ❧ But as you know, this does not sit well with me as this again goes against our ROEs and the result is we end up with speculation and man's idea, thus, perpetuating the issue in trying to understand this letter
- ❧ As we customarily do, let's look to Scripture first, then historical context

“hidden manna”



- ❧ What else does Scripture give tells us about manna?
- ❧ After Israel named it manna in Ex 16, they were commanded to fill a jar with it before the LORD throughout their generations
 - ❧ As such, Aaron placed it before the ark of the Testimony
 - ❧ They ate manna for 40 years until they arrived to the promised land
- ❧ Heb 9 gives us more detail and tells us this manna in a golden jar was placed inside the ark of the covenant along with Aaron’s rod that budded along with the tablets (10 commandments)
 - ❧ In the ark of the covenant were: golden jar w/ manna; Aaron’s rod; tablets
- ❧ You take this together with one of Jesus’s most prolific claims in Jn 6 that He is the True Living Bread (the True Manna) that came down from heaven which man may eat of and not die... we get this

“hidden manna” & “white stone”



- ✧ The manna account in Scripture points to Jesus coming to die for us and give us life
- ✧ Now what about white stone? “white stone” is not used together just here in this letter to Pergamum
- ✧ So lets look at the Greek
- ✧ “white stone” is leukos psēphos which means a bright white smooth stone
- ✧ Now there’s something interesting about psēphos and it’s used only one other time in the NT in Acts...

“hidden manna” & “white stone”



Acts 26:2-11 (Paul was before Agrippa and permitted to make his defense)

2 “In regard to all the things of which I am accused by the Jews, I consider myself fortunate, King Agrippa, that I am about to make my defense before you today; 3 especially because you are an expert in all customs and questions among the Jews; therefore I beg you to listen to me patiently.

4 “So then, all Jews know my manner of life from my youth up, which from the beginning was spent among my own nation and at Jerusalem; 5 since they have known about me for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that I lived as a Pharisee according to the strictest sect of our religion.

“hidden manna” & “white stone”



6 And now I am standing trial for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers; 7 the promise to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly serve God night and day. And for this hope, O King, I am being accused by Jews. 8 Why is it considered incredible among you people if God does raise the dead?

9 “So then, I thought to myself that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. 10 And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death I cast my **vote (psēphos)** against them. 11 And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme; and being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities.

“hidden manna” & “white stone”



- ✧ So what's interesting is that psēphos in ancient times were white stones used to cast a vote against the accused
 - ✧ Paul did it against Stephen and Christians he persecuted
- ✧ Now let's pull this together
- ✧ Jesus is promising that if the believers in Pergamum remain faithful (and repent for those who are engaged in idol worship), Jesus is promising to give them the TRUE hidden manna and the TRUE white stone with their name inscribed on it
- ✧ In other words: Jesus is promising that if they obey and remain faithful, they will be rewarded and receive the gift of eternal life and Jesus will not come with the sword of His mouth, but instead w/a white stone w/his name on it as a personal invitation to the marriage supper of the lamb!

“hidden manna” & “white stone”



UNIVERSAL TRUTH: what we can glean from in the “white stone” promise is that Jesus will rename us!

☞ Just as God renamed Abram → Abraham; Sarai → Sarah; Jacob → Israel; Simon → Cephas!

SIDE NOTE: From a historical context. If there was some teachings or influences that taught or promised some aspect of a “hidden manna” and “white stone” at the time this letter was penned, just like there was a “tree of life” in Ephesus, the “crown of life” in Smyrna, I wouldn’t discount that. That stays true to our ROEs where the historical context is corroborated with Scripture!

☞ As long as we don’t make the Scripture fit history, but rather view history through the lens of Scripture! I’m totally cool with that! 😊

☞ And that takes us to the end of the letter to Pergamum

☞ Next on deck: Thyatira