

04aa08-Letter-to-Pergamum

by "Sister Anne" | Jun 1, 2017 | 04aa Mary Unveils the Apocalypse | 0 comments



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Good evening everyone!

Greetings to our audio and YouTube listeners!

Tonight, we'll continue exploring the first column of the Seven Sevens, namely the Letters to the Seven Churches. Last week I briefly introduced the idea that each church is a region dominated by an ideology:

Ephesus is the church of leadership, especially the papal curia and cardinals,

Smyrna is the church of the poor, especially Africa and South America

Thyatira is a church where eastern religions prevail, namely India and southeast Asia

Sardis is the church of the wealthy, that is, North America

Laodicea is the church of tepidity, namely Europe

The sixth church is very special, Philadelphia represents the cream of all the regions, the select 144,000

Tonight, we'll discuss the third church, Pergamum, the church dominated by Communism, especially Russia and China.

Let's begin by reading the letter. It's about six verses.

And to the angel of the Church in *Pergamum* write: Thus says He who has the sharp two-edged sword: I know where you dwell—where the throne of Satan is—and you hold fast my name, 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. But I have against you a few things: you have some there holding fast the doctrine of Balaam who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, the eating of idol-offerings and the committing of impurity. Even so, you too have some people holding fast the doctrine of the Nicolaitans in the same way. Repent therefore! But if not, I will come to you quickly, and I will war against them with the sword of my mouth. He that has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches! To him that conquers, I will give of the hidden manna, and I will give a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no man knows, except him that receives it

Rev 2:12-18

Communism

In our very first conference we listened to Mary explain at length to Father Gobbi that the blood-thirsty seven-headed red dragon in Chapter 12 is a symbol of atheistic communism. Communism is a war on God. Who has been at war with God from the beginning, the ancient serpent?

And the great dragon. . . that ancient serpent, is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world

Rev 12:9, 20:2, 20:7

404g–The huge Red Dragon has succeeded during these years in conquering humanity with the error of theoretical and practical atheism, which has now seduced all the nations of the earth. It has thus succeeded in building up for itself a new civilization without God, materialistic, egoistic, hedonistic, arid and cold, which carries within itself the seeds of corruption and of death.

404h–The huge Red Dragon has the diabolical task of taking all humanity away from the Dominion of God, from the glorification of the Most Holy Trinity, from the full actualization of the plan of the Father who, by means of the Son, has created it for his glory.

To the Priests, Our Lady's Beloved Sons

The communist ideal is committed to the destruction of religion, physically destroying churches, mosques and temples, imprisoning and executing religious leaders, teaching anti-god propaganda in schools, in the media and in every public event. Until the rise of Lenin, Russia had been a Christian empire for a thousand years. After Lenin, few churches were left standing. A few became museums, while others became office buildings. In the past three years, donations from Americans have helped pay for the deconstruction of multiple floors inside of a church in the city of Vladivostok, the restoration of its steeple, and new pews. It now looks like a church again, but it's very difficult to fill the church with worshipers. Several generations have been raised in ignorance of God. The policies of Lenin, Stalin and Krushchev was to exterminate primarily Christian leaders and zealous Christians who would be likely to hand on the faith. Statistics range from a conservative 12 million martyrs to 20 million martyrs. The foundations of the faith are gone. Missionaries have to start from square one. Yes, some seek baptism from Orthodox and Catholic priests, but they have barely the faintest idea what it means. For some it's just a ritual for good luck or a way to remotely reconnect with one's ancestors. Russians require extensive instruction in the Faith, after they've been motivated to become interested in religion. Missionaries from Russia say that Americans can't even imagine the interior condition of the people. And we're just talking about Russia. Lenin fever quickly spread to China and many other countries. We sometimes think of China as a non-Christian nation, but we forget how large it is. A minority of its vast population is usually larger than the entire population of other countries. Hundreds of thousands of Chinese Christians have suffered severely for the Faith. Since the Dragon's throne is in Pergamum or Pergamum we need to learn all we can about this city because the Woman of Rev 12 is particularly in battle with communism.

I'll be culling my information from:

The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia and their Place in the Plan of the Apocalypse by W. M. Ramsay (1904)

The ABC of Biblical Archeology, the Bible and Christ, by Dr. Clifford Wilson (1995)

The Apocalypse of Saint John, by Father E. Sylvester Berry (1921)

The Apocalypse of Saint John, by James J. L. Ratton (1915)

and various internet sites and random sources

Like all the seven churches, Pergamum is in modern Turkey. The name has evolved to Bergama with a population of some 75 million persons, mostly Moslems. Turkey pretends to welcome Christians, but we already mentioned the recent murder of the successor of Saint Polycarp, the Bishop of modern Smyrna, by an Islamic zealot. But we want to know more about Pergamum at the time when the Book of Revelation was written and if it had a young Christian community dwelling among worshipers of Greek and Roman gods.

Ancient Pergamum

The history and the coinage of Pergamum can be traced back into the fifth century B.C.; but its superiority and headship in Asia began in 282, when Philetaerus threw off allegiance to King Lysimachus and founded the kingdom of Pergamum, which was transmitted through a succession of kings. Pergamum was the official capital of the Province of Asia for two centuries and a half: so that its history as the seat of supreme authority over a large country lasts about four centuries, and had not yet come to an end when the Seven Letters were written.

The Greek name suggests a fortified height or elevation. Indeed, even today there is still an impressive conical hill rising from a fertile plain. The Greeks loved drama and the theater of Pergamum, built on this hill, was one of the steepest theaters in the world. It could seat 10,000 spectators. It was built (or at least enlarged) more than two hundred years before Christ. This theatre was probably also used for the Olympics and eventually for Roman games, and finally for Christian martyrs. Pergamum was not a sea city. Like Russia and China, most of the inhabitants lived in the mainland. The city gained wealth and importance because its leader Eumenes II offered troops to assist the Romans during the Third Macedonian War (171-168 B.C.). As a reward Rome bestowed upon Eumenes the territory of the defeated King Perseus, who had falsely denounced his brother as a traitor so that he would be executed. Prince Perseus had inherited all the dominion of his father, but the territory and vast wealth served to enlarge and enrich the smaller kingdom of Pergamum. Eumenes laid out a magnificent residential city, adorning it with temples and other public buildings. His passion, and that of his successor, was for literature and the fine arts. The library at Pergamum rivaled that of Alexandria. So many sheepskins were required for the scrolls, that a special way of preparing the skins was developed, and these skins were called *charta pergamena*, which evolved into our English word, parchment. Communism is maintained by an endless stream of propaganda, and in Lenin's time that meant the press, so "paper" is a good word for churches located in communist territory. Pope Saint John Paul said that the documentation of atheism was the AntiWord. Indeed, this city is the throne of Satan, whom Jesus called "the father of lies" [Jn 8:44], lying to Eve about God, from the very beginning.

The Sword against Compromise

Let's comment on the letter, line by line.

To the angel of the Church in Pergamum write

Rev 2:12

There is a tradition recorded in the *Apostolic Constitutions* [vii, 46] that it was a certain Gaius, to whom Jesus and Saint John addressed his third epistle, but we have no other information to verify that he was the first bishop of Pergamum. It is significant that John never names the bishops, which makes it all the more certain that the letters were less concerned with the original churches than with church communities of a future era.

Thus, says He who has the sharp two-edged sword

Rev 2:12

The sword is not in his hand, but in his mouth:

In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth issued a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength

Rev 1:16

And at the end of the book, He is mounted on a white horse.

He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. . . From his mouth issues a sharp sword

Rev 19:11, 15

So, the main purpose of this sword is to combat error as we are told in the Letter to the Hebrews:

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Heb 4:12

At Midnight Mass we sing about the Infant Jesus descending like the angel on Passover night with a sword to execute justice but the sword of Jesus is to kill falsehood:

For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice

Jn 18:37

The sword of the Apocalypse is the sharp-pointed, double-edged, cut-and-thrust sword used in the Roman armies, not the Oriental scimitar, or the mere cutting sword employed by many nations, and especially by the Greek soldiers. Gladiators were sword-bearers. The Roman governor of Pergamum had the privilege of the *ius gladii*, the justice of the gladiator, which is the right to inflict capital punishment. Governors of Provinces were divided into a higher and a lower class, according as whether they were or were not invested with this power. The sword, in ancient time, meant serious business. Jesus wanted no compromises in his Church. Church leaders, the angels of the churches, must teach clear doctrine. Communism puts forward a material utopia, a heaven on earth. Christianity isn't against earthly prosperity, but mammon can't become one's religion. In communist countries it's a state religion. Let's take a look at the situation of the Chinese Catholic Church today.

I think we all know that there are two Catholic Churches in China, the state-approved church and the underground church. For many decades the communists allowed limited freedom of worship to Catholics on condition that the state choose the bishops, not the pope, thus causing a grave disconnect in the succession of Peter. In the United States there isn't significant difference between the fifty states, but in China they say for Catholics "each diocese is like living in its own country." For one thing the terrain is different. Some places are remote and very rural. Some places are very Buddhist, or very Catholic, or very Communist. Where Communists are the tiny minority, the married couples are able to have multiple children and openly conduct religious services. But of course, that situation is rare. In most places the Church has seen periods of extreme persecution. Bishops, priests and laity can be taken away at night and appear again after decades in concentration camps, if they survive the camps. Therefore, the situation with the State Church is extremely complex. Many bishops agreed to the rules of the state church because they felt they could never give the sacraments to the people at all. After the ordination under the eyes of the state, many of these bishops sent their names by way of secret channels to Rome to ask the Holy Father to validate their ordination, and Rome did its best to judge the candidate. The state church was not famous for heroes. Some men sought the bishopric because of the prestige, and many took wives openly because it was legal to do so. Pope John Paul and Pope Benedict worked hard to purge the situation and work out a deal something like existed during the period of Communist Poland. Rome could present candidates to the state, and if the state approved, the man would be ordained bishop. The Polish got to be very clever. The Polish Communists always rejected the first half dozen names, so the Polish would first present priests who they didn't really want to be bishops. The Polish bishops would pretend to be very frustrated and disappointed when the Communists rejected their "first picks." The one the bishops *wanted* to be named bishop had to keep a low profile. Karol Wojtyla hung out with university students, wrote poetry, published treatises on love and marriage, and belonged to a dramatic theatre. He appeared to them as a young anti-establishment man. The Communists boasted that they would hold out until the bishops sent them the name of this crazy priest.

Around 2010, or a few years before, the Chinese Communist party began to be very concerned to put forward a good profile to the west, for the sake of trade, so they promised the Pope that he could have the last word on whether a man was ordained bishop. This did wonders to reconcile the underground church with the state church, because there had been a lot of hurt feelings and acrimony between Catholics who had suffered terribly because of their loyalty to Rome over many decades, and the state Church Catholics. But things were looking good, until the day came when it was time to ordain a batch of bishops. On the feast of the Epiphany, in 2011, the first batch of openly, lawfully, papally approved bishops since the beginning of Communism in China. It was going to be a massive celebration with many dignitaries present. All the Chinese seminarians would be in attendance. But the night before, word went round the dormitory that the Communists were slipping in a man of their own to be ordained the next morning. This would compromise everyone and everything.

Most of the seminarians felt horrified, but only one seminarian, Joseph Cheng had the courage to run away and refuse to be present at the big Mass. A professor at the seminary learned of it and knew that Cheng would be imprisoned. He moved quickly to contact the Vatican which contacted the U.S. Embassy. Friends helped him to find his way to the embassy and onwards to Saint Louis, Missouri, where he was ordained a Priest. Joseph Cheng might never see his family again.

I remember the gasp of dismay among the nuns in the refectory as I read out-loud from the *Roman Observer* the news of that defiant ordination. We had been so happy for the Chinese Catholics with the news of the agreement with the Vatican, and now the Communists had betrayed the pope himself. From that day forward the Vatican has been in a dogged dialog, trying to reopen channels of cooperation. Very recently Pope Francis released some remarks giving the impression that things were mended, or nearly mended, but an article came out just this week. I'll quote a few extracts:

Core leaders of the Patriotic Church and the Bishop's Conference of the Catholic Church in China met at Wuhan, on Feb. 21-22. They discussed their work for 2017 and the coming five years . . . On Feb. 17, church leaders said that having a "political mind" is an undeniable responsibility—a stand that directly contradicts the Vatican . . . Joseph Zhang, a Chinese blogger in Beijing, said that these associations were Beijing puppets. "Bishop Shen's speech was most likely prepared by Beijing. Having a 'political mind' means obeying the rule, direction and path of the Party." A photo was released to the president of the Leaders of the Patriotic Association and the Bishops' Conference assembled outside at a memorial to pay tribute to Bishop Dong Guangqing, the first Chinese bishop elected and ordained by China without papal mandate in 1958.

<https://international.la-croix.com/news/a-political-mind-essential-for-chinas-state-aligned-church/4795>

Chinese Catholics are trying to make Pope Francis understand that this was a deliberate thumbing the nose to the Vatican, despite various documents that might be signed declaring the contrary. So now we can understand why Jesus brings a sharp sword to this church. They need to stand on one side of truth or the other. There is no possibility of compromise with the government authorities.

Antipas

I know where you dwell—where the throne of Satan is—and you hold fast my name, 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

Rev 2:13

Jesus says to the Christians in Communist countries: "I know how much you suffer! You are living in hell, in Satan's headquarters! I praise you for bearing witness to my name among the atheists, standing up for Christ, not denying that you are Christians." But who is this martyr Antipas? According to one Christian tradition, John the Apostle ordained Antipas as bishop of Pergamum during the reign of the Roman emperor Domitian. But as I cited above, other sources give the name of Gaius.

Some calendars of Eastern Rite Christians celebrate April 11th as the feast day of Saint Antipas. But there are hundreds of early Roman era martyrs for which we have no documentation beyond the name of the martyr. Occasionally a brief story provides a few facts, but often the story doesn't appear until several centuries after the death of the martyr so it could often be a pious legend (if lies can be considered pious). Maybe, maybe, the Saint Antipas of April 11th is the same as Antipas of Pergamum, and the legend is true that he was martyred around 92 A.D. by being burned to death inside of a bronze bull-shaped altar. What would have been his crime? The story says that he had cast out so many demons that it disturbed the pagan priests who worshiped these demons as gods.

I cling to the simple fact that we really don't know anything for certain about this person except that he stands for every faithful witness who is killed in a communist country where Satan has his throne. Somewhere in the book "*Witness*" Josyp Terelya recounts how the Virgin Mary appeared for several weeks over a tiny chapel's cupola in Communist Ukraine in April 1986. Thousands of people saw her, and some heard her tell them not to forget the martyrs of Communism. We must honor their memory; we must honor their power of intercession. They are looking down on us with concern. They have won great merits. They are eagerly desiring us to ask them to help them. They can obtain blessings and miracles for us to help us conquer the Dragon. We only have to ask. Antipas represents this vast multitude above us and behind us. They have our backs. We must step out bravely and bear witness too. And, unlike them, we might not have to suffer death because we have so many in heaven watching over us. Eventually, the Christians stopped being thrown to the lions in Rome, and Rome became the seat of Christianity. We can win if we persevere.

The Sins of Balaam: Greed and Lust

But if we do as the patriotic Church and burn "a little incense to the god of materialism and compromise" communism will get stronger and both Jesus and the communists will come at us with a sharp sword. This seems to be what was going on with the Pergamunites who held fast to Balaam

But I have against you a few things: you have some there holding fast the doctrine of Balaam who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, the eating of idol-offerings and the committing of impurity

Saint Jude talks about Balaam:

Beloved, being very eager to write to you of our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith [against] ungodly persons who pervert the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ [who] revile whatever they do not understand . . . Woe to them! For they walk in the way of Cain, and abandon themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error, and perish in Korah's rebellion . . . It was of these also that Enoch . . . prophesied: "Behold, the Lord comes with his holy myriads, to execute judgment and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness" . . . You must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ who said to you, "In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions. Convince those, who doubt; save others, by snatching them out of the fire; on others have mercy but with fear, hating even their garments soiled by the flesh

Letter of Jude

The Apostle Jude names three sins that will be prevalent in the last times: the sin of Cain, the sin of Korah, and the sin of Balaam. Cain believed in God and offered sacrifice, but God wasn't pleased with his worship, and Cain became jealous of Abel. Something was insincere, or hypocritical with Cain's offering, or perhaps Cain cut corners and did not offer a generous tithe thus displaying his lack of trust in God's providence. Yahweh encouraged Cain to try harder and God would be pleased, but instead Cain took out his anger on Abel. How many people come to Mass to offer God their worship, but they are holding sins in their heart and in their lives with contraception, shady business deals, unforgiveness, and the like?

Then there is the sin of Korah with his Levite followers. They thought that ministry was all about being big shots. They aspired to be priests, even though they weren't chosen. They were not descended from the line of Aaron. They brought their censers to the Tabernacle to minister to Yahweh, but God was appalled by their pride and blasphemy. He caused the earth to split open and swallow them up. How many women today aspire to be priests? A nun was in the news just yesterday. How many people boldly approach the tabernacle to receive Holy Communion when they are not in a state of grace? The Blessed Virgin complains of this in her apparitions, warning that great punishments will come if there is no repentance for this kind of blasphemy.

And then there is the sin of Balaam. Only the people of Pergamum are charged with this sin.

Balaam is a historical figure, for whom there is extra-biblical confirmation. In 1967, on the East Bank of the Jordan, an inscription was discovered in which Balaam, son of Peor, is named as a "seer" of [local] deities: various oracles, both of doom and salvation, are ascribed to him. The Bible presents him as a soothsayer in the service of the Balak, king of Moab, who employs him to curse Israel.

Jesus of Nazareth Vol III: The Infancy Narratives by Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI) (2012) p.91

King Balak had been watching 2-1/2 million Israelites cross the Red Sea and work their way across the desert. He wants them all dead. He wants his clan to be lords of the earth. He's not convinced that the Promised Land can support this large population. It's a depopulation agenda. Balaam and King Balak were Midianites: Midian was the son of Abraham's third wife Keturah. All these sons of Abraham were circumcised and worshiped Yahweh as the only God. At least for the first few generations, they acknowledged that the descendants in the line of their brothers Isaac and Jacob carried on the special blessing that blessed the whole world. But after awhile, insincere worship allows a bad angel to deceive a person in one's prayer life. Balaam was a corrupt worshiper and he gloried in his powers of blessing and cursing and prophesying because he had visions in the night. He prophesied for money. Religion was a lucrative business for him.

Isn't it interesting that Balaam is a Midianite, a Shriner? We've heard the Blessed Mother say a great deal about the Beast which comes up from the sea as Freemasonry, and the Beast which comes from the land as Ecclesiastical Masonry. It's all about blasphemy, using religion like a business, and all the while worshiping the dragon. People don't always realize that they are being moved by evil spirits. The demons are careful with some people to stay under cover, or under the covers, sending messages through the images of dreams. Balaam is able to make a prophecy that comes true because the angelic spirits live in a dimension outside of space and time. They can predict some events. But the evil spirits weren't powerful enough to help Balaam curse the Israelites for King Balak. God did not deign to appear to this false

prophet, but used a talking donkey to inform Balaam that he absolutely must not curse his chosen people. So, the evil spirits saved face by giving Balaam a true prophecy to make him appear to others as holy and authentic:

I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not nigh: a star shall come forth out of Jacob and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel

Num 24:17

Many clerics appear holy and authentic, but Jesus is coming with his sharp sword. But what is the letter to Pergamum saying about

the doctrine of Balaam who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, the eating of idol-offerings and the committing of impurity

Rev 2:14

Balaam is always associated with the “Baal of Peor.” Peor was a mountain or high place in Moabite territory. Baal simply meant Lord. Baal Peor could have originally meant the Lord Yahweh, but the Law of Moses or even the natural law was not practiced by the Moabites. After awhile, the truth comes out regarding Balaam. Since he could not bring the Israelites down with a curse, he invites them to celebrate a feast. It turns out to be an orgy in which food is offered to a false God. This was more fun than Moses’ Ten Commandments. There is a significant apostasy there in the desert. This was a particularly heinous sin because these people were living off Manna. Their whole life was a miracle. They or their parents had walked through the Red Sea. They had no excuse for accidentally falling into a false liturgy to a false God.

Thus, Israel yoked himself to Baal of Peor. And the anger of Yahweh was kindled against Israel; and Yahweh said to Moses, “Take all the leaders of the people, and hang them in the sun before Yahweh (that is in the sight of the Ark and Tabernacle), that the fierce anger of Yahweh may turn away from Israel.” And Moses said to the judges of Israel, “Every one of you slay your men who have yoked themselves to Baal of Peor.” And behold, one of the people of Israel came and brought a Midianite woman to his family, in the very sight of Moses and in the sight of the whole congregation of the people of Israel, while they were weeping at the door of the Tent of Meeting. When Phinehas the son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose and left the congregation, and took a spear in his hand and went after the man of Israel into the inner room, and pierced both of them, the man of Israel and the woman, through her body. . . Thus, the plague was limited, twenty-four thousand Israelite died there in the desert

Num 25:3-6

Like the Apostle Jude, Saint Peter also warns that the same sin of Balaam will be seen in the last days

There will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction . . . (Then Peter compares good Christians in this period to Abraham’s nephew Lot who suffered to see the sins going on in Sodom and Gomorrah) . . . They (these sinners) count it pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their dissipation, carousing with you. They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed. Accursed children! Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray; they have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor/Peor, who loved gain from wrongdoing

2Pt 2:1, 13-15

So now we have a new element, which fills out the picture. Freemasons, and Ecclesiastical Masons, are not only guilty of watering down dogma with compromise, but they justify all sorts of sexual perversion. I hope that the Lord spared Saints Peter, Paul and Jude from seeing the future too clearly. They would have collapsed in tears and horror at the level of pornography, the slaughter of the unborn, and the unspeakable child-trafficking going on in broad daylight.

Lot's Wife

Surely, we are to be pitied with Lot. Isn't it interesting that when Jesus was telling the Apostles about the latter times he said:

Remember Lot's wife!

Lk 17:32

The mystical doctor, Saint John of the Cross, has a famous counsel on this passage:

In order to preserve your tranquility of soul, even if the whole world crumbles you should not desire to advert to these things or interfere, remembering Lot's wife who was changed into hard stone because she turned her head to look at those who in the midst of much clamor and noise were perishing [Gn19:26]. You should practice this with great fortitude, for you will thereby free yourself from many sins and imperfections and guard the tranquility and quietude of your soul with much profit before God and others. Ponder this often, because it is so important that, for not observing it, many religious not only failed to improve through their other works of virtue and religious observance, but ever slipped back from bad to worse

"Counsels to a Religious" #2, Saint John of the Cross

Why did God punish Lot's wife so severely? She had not committed the sins of the Sodomites. Her husband and daughters fled the city when the angels told them it was time to escape. She also left the city. But she became curious and turned her head to look at the Sodomites. Before this happened, the Holy Trinity, in the person of three angels actually led Abraham out to look over the towns of Sodom and Gomorrah. God revealed the grave sin to Abraham and told him He was going to have to punish the inhabitants. Abraham immediately begins interceding. It's not enough for God to spare the justice of destruction and sudden death, but how do we know if it prevented some of these people from being damned? God wants us to know about sin so as to share his grief, and to offer prayer and atonement. But He doesn't want us to be curious about sin. Jesus warns those who live in the latter times: "Remember Lot's wife!" Yes, there is a lot of things going on, but it's not for juicy gossip, it's not for us to look on with indifference. If we see it, we must feel a deep sorrow with Jesus and Mary, and plea for conversion and the saving of souls. If we don't have that deep sorrow, then we better not dare to peek or we will find our hearts hardening and we will risk turning into a pillar of stone. It will be a different kind of sin than the sodomites, but it will be sin, all the same. Saint John of the Cross urges us to preserve our souls in continual prayer and not to fall into the trap of getting preoccupied, or even entertained, by other people's wrongdoing.

Hidden Manna and Nicolaitans

Even so, you too have some people holding fast the doctrine of the Nicolaitans in the same way. Repent therefore! But if not, I will come to you quickly, and I will war against them with the sword of my mouth.

Rev 2:14-16

Here's that sword again:

And Balaam's donkey saw the angel of the LORD standing in the road, with a drawn sword in his hand; and the ass turned aside out of the road, and went into the field; and Balaam struck the ass, to turn her into the road.

Num 22:23

And here again are the followers of Nicolas. Last week we heard the Lord praise the Church of Ephesus for hating the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. But some Christians in Pergamum are caught up in the error:

He that has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches! To him that conquers, I will give of the hidden manna.

Rev 2:17

When the Israelites were still in the desert and had not yet entered the promise land:

Moses said to Aaron, "Take a jar, and put an *omer* of manna in it, and place it before Yahweh, to be kept throughout your generations"

Ex 16:33

Normally the manna only lasted a day but this manna remained as a witness after they reached the promised land. But who looked inside the ark? Was it hidden manna? Was it still in the ark when the temple was destroyed?

The prophet [Jeremiah], having received an oracle, ordered [at the time of the deportation to Babylon] that the tent tabernacle and the ark should follow with him, and he went out to the mountain where Moses had gone up and had seen the inheritance of God. And Jeremiah found there a cave, and he brought there the tent and the ark and the altar of incense, and he sealed up the entrance.

Mac 2:4-5

And when you have [returned to Israel and] multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, says Yahweh, they shall no more say, "The ark of the covenant of Yahweh." It shall not come to mind, or be remembered, or missed; it shall not be made again.

Jer 3:16

Was the Lord alluding to his pledge of future glory after Apocalyptic tribulation?

The Lord will disclose these hidden things, and the glory of the Lord and the cloud will appear, as they were shown in the case of Moses, and as Solomon asked that the place should be specially consecrated.

2 Mac 2:8

Or was the Lord promising to sustain the faithful with the Bread of Life during a period when Mass is forbidden, as Catholics had to do in communist times, going out to the forests for liturgies in Ukraine? In the catacombs the Holy Eucharist was symbolized by a manna-jar. God would reward with "hidden food" those who refuse to eat food sacrificed to the idols of the day, which Mary listed for us in a previous conference on the Beast from the Sea.

The White Stone and the New Name

I will give a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no man knows, except him that receives it

Rev 2:17

Peter is the rock

The color white prevails in the Apocalypse: white garments, white wool, white horse, white cloud, white throne. It's all about the light of God and purity.

The "white stone" was, doubtless a tessera, and ought, strictly speaking, to be called by that name, but there is no English word which gives an adequate rendering, for the thing is not used among us, and therefore we have no name for

it. It was a little cube or rectangular block of stone or ivory with words or symbols engraved on one or more faces. Such tesserae were used for a great variety of purposes.

A stone is the opposite of compromise

It could refer to the custom of showing a little stone, with some appropriate mark on it, to gain entrance to a feast or banquet. The name inscribed on the stone suggests that the Christian will have a right to partake of the good things which the Lord reserves for those who win the victory.

It could apply to acquittal, a declaration of innocence. A Greek jury would choose either white or black stones to give their individual votes -black for guilty, white for innocent. In that light the promise would mean acquittal on the day of judgment.

It could suggest the role of an ambassador. They carried a white stone with a cord through its center. No-one dared go against the authority thus claimed. The emperor himself was represented. We who are Christians have the right to be ambassadors for Christ, urging men to be reconciled to God [cf 2Cor 5:20].

Isaiah says that the whole church Jerusalem will get a new name. Isaiah speaks much about the deportation to Babylon, a time of trial, and then the restoration of Jerusalem. This very much resonates with the final chapter of the Apocalypse.

For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her vindication goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a burning torch. The nations shall see your vindication, and all the kings your glory; and you shall be called by a new name which the mouth of Yahweh will give

Isa 62:1-2

Yet, the reward for Christians suffering in communist countries seems to be very personal,

The name "which no one knows but himself" [v. 12] is an allusion to his divinity, which is something sublime, mysterious and beyond man's grasp. Even if it is against the law to practice your Faith openly or call on my name, I, the Lord, know your name.

Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.

Isa 43:1

Religion in Pergamum

Reading from: The ABC of Biblical Archeology, the Bible and Christ, by Dr. Clifford Wilson. 1995

A colossal altar of Zeus dominated both city and plain. Caesar-worship developed as from 29 B.C.. A center for the cult of the healer-hero Asklepios: sick pilgrims slept in his temple: Aelius Aristides (2nd cent.) having done so received a new name, Theodorus, and was given a sacred emblem that he carried about as pious consolation. Asklepios was closely associated with the serpent. The Hellenic religious spirit represented the god as a dignified human figure, very similar in type to Zeus, supporting his right hand on a staff round which a serpent is twined. His serpent nature clings to him, though only as an attribute and adjunct, in the fully Hellenised form. In the Anatolian ritual the god was the Asklepien serpent, rather than the human Asklepios. The Emperor Caracalla, during his visit to Pergamum, is represented as adoring the Pergamenian deity, a serpent wreathed round the sacred tree. Between the God-Serpent and the God-Emperor stands the little figure of Telesphorus, the Consummator, a peculiarly Pergamenian conception closely connected with Asklepios. Caracalla adoring the God-Serpent of Pergamum Asklepios the Savior was introduced from Epidauros in a comparatively recent period, perhaps the fifth century. He appears on coins from the middle of the second century B.C. and became more and more the representative god of Pergamum. On alliance coins he regularly stands for his city.

On the royal coinage Athena and other Hellenic gods are almost the only divine types; but on the cistophori, which were intended to be the common coinage in circulation through the whole Pergamenian kingdom after 200 B.C., neither kings nor specifically Hellenic gods appear, but only symbols taken from the cults of Dionysos and Asklepios. On the obverse is the cista mystica of Dionysos within a wreath of his sacred plant the ivy: the lid of the box is pushed open by a serpent which hangs out with half its length. On

the reverse are two Asklepiian serpents with their lower parts intertwined and heads erect: between them is a bow-case containing a strung bow.

The Roman Imperial religion “was the keystone of the Imperial policy;” the official capital of the Province was necessarily the center of the Imperial ritual . . . but in Asia the spirit of municipal pride and rivalry was so strong that it would have endangered the hold of the State *cultus* on the other great cities, if they had been forced to look to any one city as the sole head of the religion. Roman policy showed its usual adaptability by turning municipal pride to its purpose and making it act in an Imperial channel, so that the object of competition among all the great cities was to attain higher rank in the State religion.

Pergamum, then, as being first promoted to all three stages in the Imperial worship must have been the official capital and titular seat of Roman authority. . . . AEsculapius had acquired so much prominence that he is called Pergameus deus. His grove was recognized by the Roman senate in the reign of Tiberius as possessing the rights of sanctuary. . . . At Pergamos snakes were used in various nocturnal rites. The Attalids even included the serpent symbol on much of their coinage.

The ABC of Biblical Archeology, the Bible and Christ, by Dr. Clifford Wilson (1995)

Athletics and Deities

The institution of organized athletics as an act of worship towards Zeus, and of the body trained to perfection as a thing dedicated to God, was a new and most startling concept in the history of mankind. But it was the necessary prelude to the birth of humanism. [Seltman, C. “The Twelve Olympians” cited in “ABC”] Gods represented especially in the form of human athletes. The

Greeks were suggesting that the athlete was the nearest to their gods. In a sense this was tied to their “humanism”, for to them the gods were ideal human beings. So, they thought of Zeus as a divine athlete, and as such he was presented naked, for it became the practice for athletes to run unclothed

The ABC of Biblical Archeology, the Bible and Christ, by Dr. Clifford Wilson (1995)

Hitler’s Architect

A German archaeologist, Carl Humann, began excavating the altar on Sept. 9, 1878. The altar was then moved back to Germany and reconstructed. Kaiser Wilhelm II celebrated its erection in Berlin in 1902. In 1933 Adolph Hitler was elected Chancellor of Germany. In 1934 he became dictator and ordered construction of the Tribune at Zeppelin Field in Nuremberg for his Nazi rallies. The architect, Albert Speer, used the Pergamon Altar as the model for the *Zeppelintribüne*. The Führer’s pulpit was in the center of the tribune, which was built from 1934 to 1937. Adolph Hitler, the Evil King of Germany started World War II in 1939. After the end of World War II, the Soviets took the Pergamon Altar to Leningrad in 1948 as spoils (same year as the rebirth of Israel). The Altar was later returned in 1958.

Ancient Pergamum was the center of pagan worship in Asia Minor, was once known as the “place where Satan dwells.”

In the first century, it was a thriving city, but after countless wars and natural disasters, the temples of Pergamum lay in ruins. By the mid-19th century, the once-great city of Pergamum was barely a memory.

Locals used this site as a quarry, looting the marble for new buildings, until 1864, when a German engineer paid a visit to Pergamum. Carl Humann was shocked by the destruction of the priceless artifacts, so he got permission to excavate the ancient city himself. What he found was one of the greatest monuments in ancient history: the Altar of Zeus.

Stone by stone, the altar was excavated and taken to Berlin, where it was reassembled and placed in its own museum. The Pergamon Museum opened in 1930, with the altar as its centerpiece.

Eventually, the altar caught the eye of a young man named Albert Speer, the new chief architect for the Nazi Party. Germany’s new chancellor, Adolf Hitler, had commissioned him to design the parade grounds

for the party rallies in Nuremberg.

For inspiration, Speer turned to the Pergamon Altar. “If you read the German written by Speer, he gives all the credit to Hitler,” says Dr. Anthony R. Santoro, the Distinguished Professor of History and President Emeritus of Christopher Newport University. “I think he’s like a good interior decorator that someone hires, and that client already has the ideas of what he wants to do, and the decorator agrees with him. So that’s what Speer did.”

Using the altar as his model, Speer created a colossal grandstand at the rally grounds in Nuremberg. It became known as the Zeppelintribüne. After the war, only a small part of it was left standing. “If you look at the kinds of ceremonies that were on display at Zeppelin field with the reconstructed temple there patterned on the Pergamum Altar, you’ll see photographs of Hitler, descending down the steps, like a tribune of the people from old Roman times,” says Santoro.

In the middle of the grandstand, where the bronze Altar of Zeus stood in ancient Pergamum, Albert Speer built Hitler’s podium. Hitler wanted to create what he called a “mass experience,” and Speer came up with the perfect idea.

Most of the Nuremberg rallies were held at night, so Speer surrounded the grandstand with 150 searchlights. The columns of light extended for miles in the sky, creating the mystical effect Hitler wanted: “The concluding meeting in Nuremberg must be exactly as solemnly and ceremonially performed as a service of the Catholic Church.”

This effect was known as the “Cathedral of Light,” and it became a hallmark of Hitler’s events. It was even used in the closing ceremonies of the 1936 Summer Olympics in Berlin. “Well, it’s a very inexpensive way of creating interest,” says Santoro. “Hitler is very much aware of German mythology, his favorite entertainment is German opera, certainly Wagner and all the mythological stories that go with Wagner. And certainly, anytime you’re looking at mythology and gods, you’re looking skyward. So, I don’t think it’s an accident that he says to Speer, ‘Let’s create an environment of looking towards the heavens, and that’s what it does.’”

Inside the rally grounds, thousands of Nazi Party members marched in torchlight parades. “These events happen at night, which gives a contrasting effect of fear, of strength, of the unknown, of mystery, and that’s all intended by Hitler,” says Santoro. “He’s very theatrical. Torchlight and fire have always been part of German mythology. I think there’s a quasi-mystical, semi-religious context to these torch parades; there are many of them in Nazi Germany.”

From his podium, Hitler mesmerized the crowds: “Not every one of you sees me and I do not see every one of you. But I feel you . . . and you feel me!” Then under the Cathedral of Light, thousands of Germans swore what they called a holy oath. “Blazing flames hold us together into eternity . . . No one shall take this faith from those who are dedicated to Germany.”

From 1933 to 1938, hundreds of thousands of people gathered at the Zeppelin field in Nuremberg every September for the Reichsparteitag, or Nazi Party Congress. But it was the 1934 rally that captured the attention of the world, thanks to what may be the greatest propaganda film of all time.

“The 1934 party film, *Triumph of the Will*, which was released in 1935, is the consummate picture of Hitler,” says Santoro. “No other film was ever made of Hitler, and he didn’t want any other film made of him. Everything that he wanted people to know about the Nazis is in that film. It was shown continuously for 12 years in Germany.”

Triumph of the Will was directed by a young German actress named Leni Riefenstahl. “She was a famous movie star. I would characterize her as the female Indiana Jones,” says Santoro. “She was pretty and shapely and popular and romantic. Hitler’s a bit of a romantic, and so he liked her.”

The film portrayed Hitler as a godlike figure, the savior of the German people. “Hitler’s entrance in the film is from the sky, like a messiah who would be descending down through the heavens, through the clouds to the faithful waiting for him below,” says Santoro. “Anytime he appears, any people who are close to him have these starry-eyed looks –almost these glazed looks as if they’re in the presence of an unearthly being. That’s intentional.”

In his speeches, Hitler often borrowed Christian phrases, like in one scene with the Hitler Youth. “After they sing their song to him, Hail Hitler to Thee, which is almost like a religious chant, he goes into his speech, and he says things like, ‘You are flesh of our flesh and blood of our blood.’ Well, he borrows that from the Roman Catholic ritual, with which he’s very familiar. It’s a very physical statement, and it resonates with that crowd.”

Hitler’s popularity skyrocketed after the release of *Triumph of the Will*. The next year, more than a million Germans came to Nuremberg to hear his speech. On the evening of September 15, 1935, Hitler announced the Nuremberg Laws. “The law for the protection of German Blood and German Honor is intended to begin the marginalization process of the Jewish people,” says Santoro. “Hitler had a lot of popular support for much of his time in office. One doesn’t get popular support by saying to the public we’re going to put the Jewish people in gas chambers and incinerate them. What he did was gradually marginalize them.”

It was also in Nuremberg that Hitler used the phrase “Final Solution” for the first time in public. “Bitter complaints have come in from countless places citing the provocative behavior of Jews. This law is an attempt to find a legislative solution. If this attempt fails, it will be necessary to transfer [the Jewish problem] . . . to the National Socialist party for a final solution.”

The Nuremberg Laws stripped the Jews of their rights as citizens. “They couldn’t teach in public universities, they couldn’t practice medicine in public hospitals,” says Santoro. “They couldn’t fly the national flag, but they could fly the Jewish flag. Then that was coupled with the Reich citizenship law, which said that Jewish people in Germany were subjects of the Reich, but not citizens.”

Hitler’s “Final Solution” is now known as the Holocaust, a word that comes from a Greek word meaning “a wholly burnt animal sacrifice.”

Centuries later in Nuremberg, in the center of a redesigned Pergamon Altar, the bronze bull was replaced by a podium. From there, Adolf Hitler announced his “Final Solution” to the world . . . and this time, the burnt sacrifice was six million Jews.

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