

UNRAVELLING THE BOOK OF REVELATION | SESSION 14

THE CHURCH OF PERGAMOS

*CONFRONTING COMPROMISE
AND WRONG DOCTRINE*

(REV. 2:12-17)



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“The Idol Feasts? No worries, you can attend. In Rome, do as the Romans do. This is the culture. You just go through the motion, as long as your heart does not believe, it’s ok.”

This was the kind of false counsel dispensed by some of the teachers in the Church of Pergamos. **They were misleading believers to accept participation in idolatry and immorality in the idol feasts which were prevalent at that time.**

In the letter to the Church of Pergamos, Jesus came strongly against **those who taught false teaching and those who participated in the feasts.** But He was also addressing another group of believers – **those who were walking right with God but chose to remain silent and not confront wrong doctrines.** He called all three groups to repent!

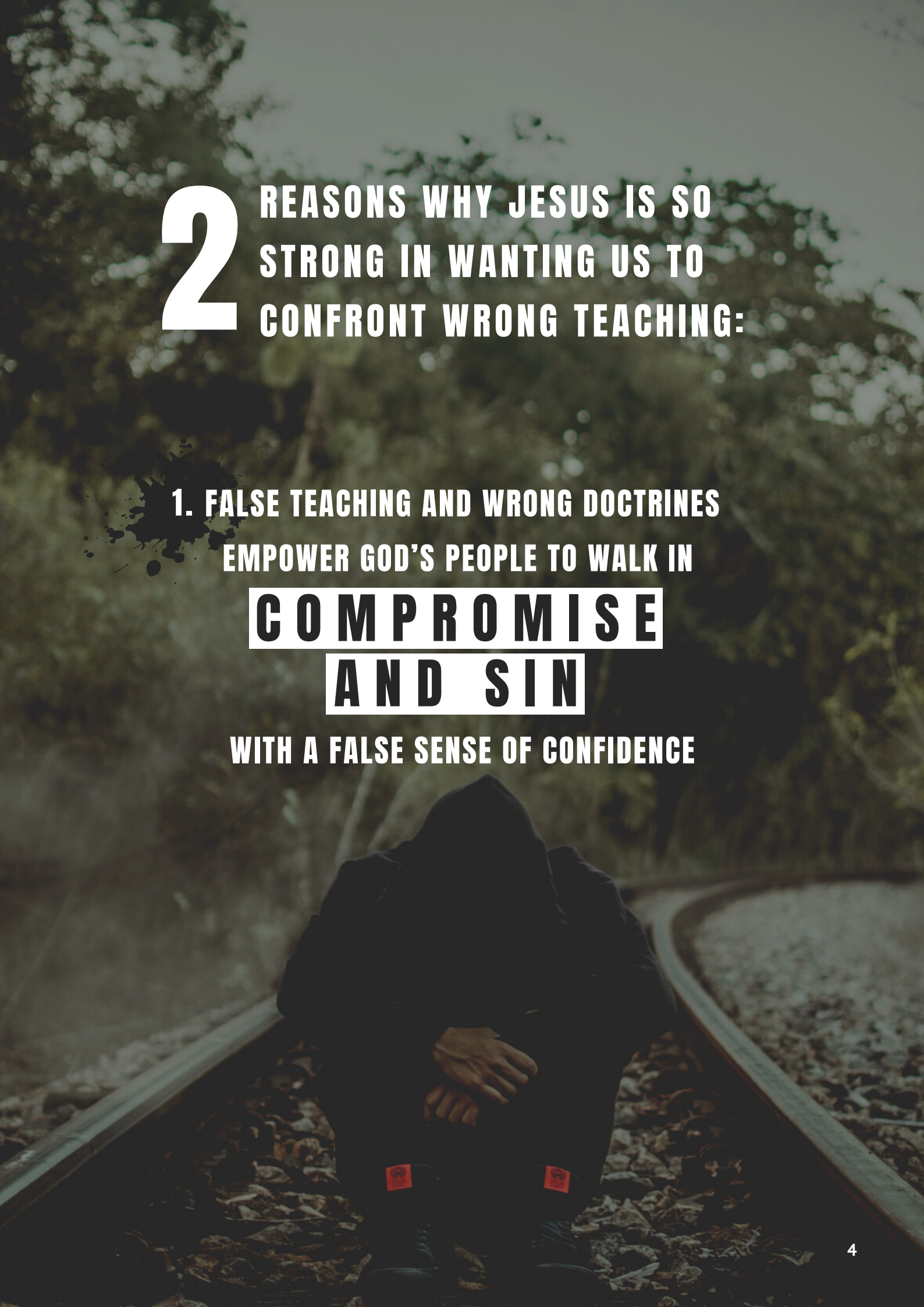
Before we go further, let's understand the background of the Church of Pergamos.

Pergamos was a wealthy city located about 20 miles from the Aegean Sea. It was the centre of worship for four major Greek gods, and also a centre for Emperor worship. It was the epicentre of darkness, the city where Satan's throne was located (Rev. 2:13). And it was here that Antipas, the bishop of the Church of Pergamos, was martyred. **The environment was intense and hostile against believers, with immense pressure exerted on them to conform to the prevailing culture.**

The primary message of the letter to the Church of Pergamos is to **love the truth** and to **endure sound doctrine**.

JESUS IS CALLING THE CHURCH TO COME OUT OF COMPROMISE AND TO CONFRONT WRONG DOCTRINE AND FALSE TEACHING.




A person wearing a dark hoodie and pants is sitting on railroad tracks in a wooded area. The person's head is buried in their hands, and they are looking down. The tracks curve to the right in the background. The overall mood is somber and reflective.

2 REASONS WHY JESUS IS SO STRONG IN WANTING US TO CONFRONT WRONG TEACHING:

**1. FALSE TEACHING AND WRONG DOCTRINES
EMPOWER GOD'S PEOPLE TO WALK IN**

**COMPROMISE
AND SIN**

WITH A FALSE SENSE OF CONFIDENCE



2. FALSE TEACHING AND WRONG DOCTRINES PLAY A MAJOR ROLE IN THE GREAT FALLING AWAY

Jesus hates the perpetuation of wrong teaching because it will cause His people to fall away. **Jesus holds us responsible if we do not speak up regarding wrong teaching. We are not to remain silent!**

There is an event called the Great Falling Away that will happen at the End of the Age (2 Thes. 2:3-12). 2 Thessalonians 2:10 tells us the reason — **because those believers did not receive the love of the truth. They did not love the truth and did not hold on to the truth.**

2 Timothy 4:2-3 emphasizes **that there is an enduring element to loving the truth, and we need to speak up, convince, correct and exhort with all patience.** We have to speak with boldness, yet all the while exercising wisdom, grace and love. We have to remember that we are confronting the wrong teaching and not the person, because the person is a fellow brother or sister-in-Christ.

To the Church in Pergamos, Jesus came as One who has the sharp two-edged sword (Rev. 2:12), to confront sin in the Church (Rev. 2:16). The double-edged sword is the Word of God (Heb. 4:12).

There are **four distinct groups** of people Jesus is addressing:

1. Those who were faithful in the midst of the intense and hostile environment.

Jesus affirmed this group for being faithful and not drawing back despite the intense pressures.

2. Those who taught and advocated false teaching and wrong doctrine.

3. Those who embraced false teaching, walking in sin with a false sense of confidence.

4. Those who lived a pure life, but tolerated or were silent about false teaching.




There were two main categories of false teaching – those who follow the doctrine of Balaam and those who hold on to the doctrine of Nicolaitans.

Balaam was a prophet who went astray. King Balak had hired him to curse Israel. He tried to do so on several occasions but the Lord stopped him each time (Num. 22 – 25). In the end, he came up with a devious plan to seduce the Israelites into immorality and idolatry through Moabite women (Num. 25:1-3; 31:2,8; Rev. 2:14).

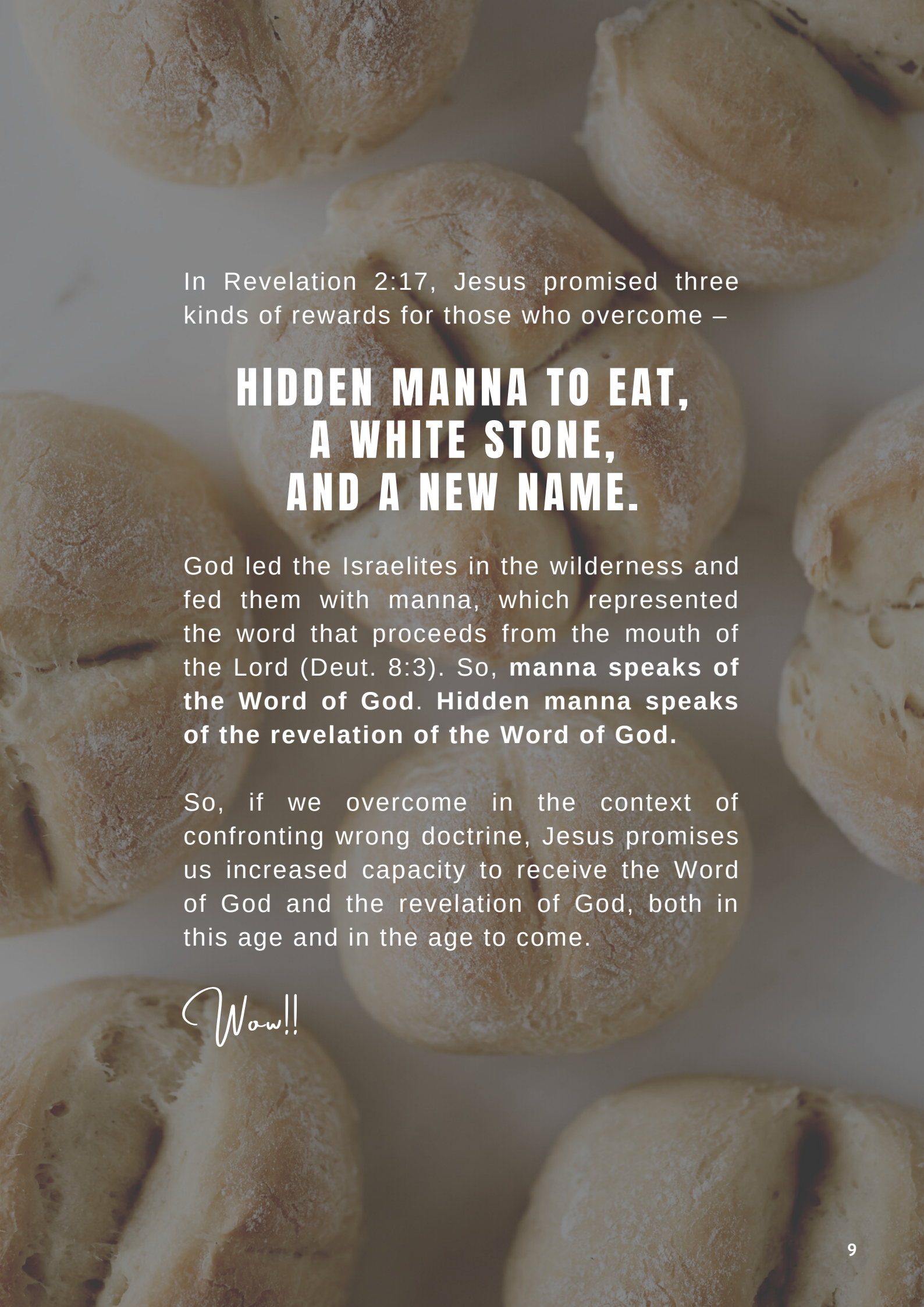
Balaam knew that if the Israelites kept on sinning and crossed a certain line, God Himself would become their adversary, and He would come and judge them. The eventual outcome of Israel's sin was the death of 24,000 Israelites in a plague!

That is what the **doctrine of Balaam** is about. The false teachers taught the people that it was okay to participate in parties involving sexual immorality and idolatry. **This kind of teaching brought about a dulling of the conscience of believers involved, encouraging them to keep on sinning, and thus setting up a trap for them to be judged by God Himself.**



The doctrine of the Nicolaitans was false grace teaching that taught that the gospel of grace had set people free from the need to observe moral standards in accordance with the Bible. **Together, these two teachings empowered the people with a false sense of confidence to walk blatantly in compromise, immorality, and idolatry.**

That was why Jesus came in so strongly in Revelation 2:16, calling the three groups of people to repent – those who taught or embraced false teachings, and those who remained silent about them. The phrase “*I will come to you quickly*” means that **the time for them to respond is short**. There will come a time when they cross a certain line and Jesus will judge. He will come against them with the sword of His mouth because **He is warring against things in their lives that are in agreement with darkness.**



In Revelation 2:17, Jesus promised three kinds of rewards for those who overcome –

**HIDDEN MANNA TO EAT,
A WHITE STONE,
AND A NEW NAME.**

God led the Israelites in the wilderness and fed them with manna, which represented the word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord (Deut. 8:3). So, **manna speaks of the Word of God. Hidden manna speaks of the revelation of the Word of God.**

So, if we overcome in the context of confronting wrong doctrine, Jesus promises us increased capacity to receive the Word of God and the revelation of God, both in this age and in the age to come.

Wow!!



A white stone, in those times, was given to **a person who did good or valiant deeds**, as well as to the **victor of games**. It gave the person special privileges, e.g., greater accessibility to go to the courts of the king/ruler or admission to special events or feasts.

Hence, having the reward of a white stone will give us greater accessibility, privilege, and honour at the marriage supper of the Lamb, which is the one thousand years of the Millennial Kingdom.

A new name reflects one's unique relationship with Jesus and reveals one's faithfulness, quality of character, devotion, and destiny in Christ. It is a name of endearment from the Lord, telling of how we have carried our heart, how we lived here on earth and our faithfulness and obedience to the Lord.

One day when we see Jesus face to face, He is going to tell the story of our love and dedication for Him to His Father (Rev. 2:17; 3:5).

He will tell of how we have treasured His truth, held fast to His name and spoken up against false teachings, even in the face of the greatest pressures and persecution.

**WILL WE SAY YES TO
LOVING THE TRUTH AND
ENDURING SOUND DOCTRINE?**

**WILL WE SPEAK UP AND
CONFRONT FALSE TEACHING?**

Because false teaching will immensely affect the spiritual condition of God's people.

Most importantly, it matters dearly to Jesus when we speak up for His truth. His heart is deeply moved and He will reward us richly!



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