

THE CHURCH AT PERGAMOS ... and the little white stone  
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(REVELATION 2: 17)

Diamonds are sometimes discovered in a desolate wilderness ; and in like manner, some of the greatest Bible treasures are found in unlikely places. There are certain Scriptures which instantly yield their gems ; there are others where rare jewels still await discovery. This fact is clearly illustrated in Christ's letter to the Church at Pergamos. At the conclusion of His message, the Lord says, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." This verse provides one of the most delightful word-pictures found in the New Testament.

#### The Stone of Witness

Hotels and inns were almost non-existent in Bible lands, and oftentimes a traveller journeying into new territory had to search diligently in order to find accommodation. Homes were few and far between, yet no householder refused hospitality if circumstances enabled him to entertain visitors. A traveller was permitted to enter the home and to stay as long as his business required. Adequate payment would be made for this kindness, but in addition, and according to the custom of the land, before he departed the guest produced a small white stone already cleverly divided into two parts. He always retained the one half, but the other was given to the host. The departing visitor would explain that some day the host might have occasion to travel in other lands, and in the event of his reaching a certain locality, he should call at the given address. If he needed hospitality he would be wise to produce his half of the white stone. It should be a stone of witness between both men. Should the one-time host need accommodation, he whom he had previously welcomed, would be delighted to return the kindness.

#### The Stone of Welcome

The small stone would be gratefully accepted and stored in a safe place, and when the owner had occasion to visit his friend's district, he would present himself at the home of his former guest. If a number of years had elapsed, it might be that the householder had forgotten the face of his former benefactor ; but any doubt concerning the matter was instantly dispelled when the caller produced the half section of the white stone. The host would examine it, and read the name written thereon, and with lights of recollection shining in his eyes he would open the door of his homestead and say, "Welcome. As you welcomed me to your heart and home when I journeyed in your land, so now it is my privilege to do likewise for you. Friend, come in." Within the warmth of the hospitable apartment, the two men would enjoy fellowship and recall the events of bygone days. The white stone of witness never failed to obtain admittance to the heart and home of the former traveller.

#### The Stone of Wealth

Thus, when Christ spoke to His Church, He urged them to overcome in the battles of life; to resist evil and follow after righteousness ; and as a reward, He would give to them a white stone. When the great Traveller comes to sojourn in our country, we may welcome Him, and be sure that some day He will return the kindness. With the passing of the

THE CHURCH AT PERGAMOS ... and the little white stone years, we shall leave our earthly abode and journey into those realms from which He came. The Lord Jesus promised that if we welcome Him here, He will welcome us there. And that is the doctrinal jewel hidden in the text, " To him that overcometh will I give . . . a white stone." The members of the Church at Pergamos, acquainted as they were with ancient customs, instantly recognized all the delightful facets of this scintillating Biblical diamond. They looked at it ; they admired it, and exultantly cried, " O grave, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?" Death held no terrors for them, for it only registered the beginning of a journey when they went to meet an old Friend. To them, the Lord's white stone was the most precious jewel ever discovered. It represented eternal wealth. They would not have sold it for a king's ransom.

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