

**Outline of
the Messages for the Full-time Training
in the Fall Term of 2016**

**GENERAL SUBJECT:
THE FAILURES IN THE CHURCHES,
THE DEGRADATION OF THE CHURCH, THE OVERCOMERS IN THE CHURCH,
THE RECOVERY OF THE CHURCH, AND THE STAGES OF THE CHURCH**

Message Thirteen

**The Stages of the Church
(2)**

The Church in Smyrna and the Church in Pergamos

Scripture Reading: Rev. 2:8-17

I. The church in Smyrna was a church under the suffering of persecution—Rev. 2:8-11:

- A. In Greek *Smyrna* means “myrrh,” a sweet spice that, in figure, signifies suffering; the church in Smyrna was a suffering church—v. 10.
- B. In speaking to the church in Smyrna, the Lord said that He is “the First and the Last, who became dead and lived again”—v. 8:
 - 1. The fact that Christ is the First and the Last means that He never changes; in suffering, the church must know that the Lord is the First and the Last, the ever-existing, unchanging One.
 - 2. The Lord’s declaration in verse 8 implies the creation—the First—and the completion—the Last—and it also implies Christ’s incarnation, human living, crucifixion, and resurrection:
 - a. This is a declaration to strengthen the suffering church in Smyrna, which was experiencing and suffering martyrdom.
 - b. The only thing that can support the saints in their martyrdom is seeing the One who created and will complete the entire universe and who was incarnated, lived on earth, was crucified, and resurrected; such a vision sustains the martyrs to stand in their sufferings—v. 10.
 - 3. As the One who became dead and lived again, Christ is the living One—v. 8; 1:18:
 - a. The Lord Jesus suffered death and lived again; He entered into death, but death could not hold Him, because He is the resurrection—Acts 2:24; John 11:25.
 - b. “I became dead, and behold, I am living forever and ever”—Rev. 1:18:
 - (1) Resurrection is a life that passes through death and still remains living.

- (2) Christ's resurrection is the lengthening of His days; He will exist forever and ever in His resurrection.
- c. The resurrected Christ, the living One, is living in us and among us; therefore, all the churches should be living as He is, full of life and overcoming death—1 Tim. 3:15.
- C. As the One who became dead and lived again, Christ has the keys of death and of Hades—Rev. 1:18:
 - 1. The Lord Jesus overcame death and destroyed the devil, the keys of death and of Hades are now in His hand, and He is victorious over the grave—Heb. 2:14; Rev. 1:18.
 - 2. In His resurrection the Lord Jesus took away the authority of death and of Hades; death is subject to Him, and Hades is under His control—v. 18.
- D. “Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life”—2:10:
 - 1. The Lord insists that the life of all those who serve Him belongs to Him; this is why we must be faithful even unto death.
 - 2. The crown of life, as a prize to those who are faithful unto death in overcoming persecution, denotes the overcoming strength that is the power of the resurrection life (Phil. 3:10); it also denotes that these overcomers have attained to the out-resurrection from the dead (v. 11), the outstanding resurrection.

II. In Greek *Pergamos* means “marriage,” implying union, and “fortified tower”; as a sign, the church in Pergamos prefigures the church that entered into a marriage union with the world and became a high fortified tower—Rev. 2:12-17:

- A. Satan's throne is in the world, the place where he dwells and the sphere of his reign; since the worldly church entered into union with the world, she dwells where Satan dwells—v. 13.
- B. “To him who overcomes, to him I will give of the hidden manna, and to him I will give a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knows except him who receives it”—v. 17:
 - 1. We need to eat the hidden manna in order to be incorporated into the New Jerusalem as the tabernacle of God—John 14:20; Rev. 21:3.
 - 2. The Lord promises the overcomer to eat of the hidden manna and to give him a white stone; this indicates that if we eat the hidden manna, we will be transformed into white stones for God's building—2:17.
 - 3. Every transformed believer as a white stone bears a new name, which no one knows except him who receives it:
 - a. Such a new name is the interpretation of the experience of the one being transformed; hence, only he himself knows the meaning of that name.
 - b. Revelation 2:17 is a word spoken by the Lord to us; we should not take it objectively but as our biography.