



when CHRIST
returns

— REVELATION 1-5 —

Review: The Revelation of Jesus describes Christ as He is now!

- not Christ emptied of His heavenly attributes and humbled in His humanity.
- Rather: Jesus fully clothed in His heavenly glory ... as He was, as He is, and as He will always be!

1. What is the Revelation? (chapter 1, verses 1-2)

- “*a revelation of Jesus Christ*”
 - *apocalypsis* (Gk) - unveiling, disclosure.
- the curtain has been pulled back, and we are looking into what is happening in the spiritual world ... what is really happening:
 - the King is on the move ... **so pay attention!**
 - the King holds the keys of death & Hades ... **so do not be afraid!**
 - Jesus is the King of Kings ... **so worship Him!**

The First Vision: 1:19 – 3:22.

Jesus, the Risen Lord, speaks to the Seven Churches of Asia.

¹⁹ “Write down what you have seen—both the things that are now happening and the things that will happen.

²⁰ This is the meaning of the mystery of the seven stars you saw in my right hand and the seven gold lampstands:

- *the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and*
- *the seven lampstands are the seven churches.*

Week #2: Jesus' message to the congregation of Ephesus.

The Lord praises them:

- because they are a Doing Church ... working hard and serving Him patiently.
- because they are a Determined Church ... refusing to deny Him in dangerous and perilous times.
- because they are an Orthodox Church ... testing what is preached to them, and holding fast to the truth they have received.

The Lord rebukes them:

- because although they are doing all the right things, their love for Jesus has grown cold, their passion for Him has faded, their intimacy is missing.

The Lord warns them:

- “Remember your first love, turn back to me, and renew again what you first had ... “or I will remove your place from among the churches.”

Last Week: Jesus' message to the congregation of Smyrna. (Rev. 2:8-11)

The Lord praises them:

- amidst a people rebelling *against* God, they are following Him faithfully.
 - they are enduring crushing persecution (*thlipsis*), to the point of death.
 - they are experiencing supernatural violence directed at Jesus, who holds the keys of death & Hades.

The Lord assures them:

- that He understands what they are going through ... He has gone through it, too.
- that their faithfulness will safely keep them from the second death.
 - *Whoever is victorious will not be harmed by the second death.* (v. 11)

Lesson: Jesus does not promise them immunity from the first death, but He does from the second death ... and since we're all going to die the first one, the real issue is the second.

This Week: Jesus' message to the congregation of Pergamum. (Rev. 2:12-17)

¹² "Write this letter to the angel of the church in Pergamum. This is the message from the one with the sharp two-edged sword:

¹³ "I know that you live in the city where Satan has his throne ...

Pergamum: ... *where Satan has his throne.*

- historically the greatest city in Asia.
 - former capital and royal city of kings.
 - religious and cultural centre of Asia.
- a university town, not a commercial hub.
 - a place for the intellectual elite & old money.
 - the Oxford, Cambridge of its day.

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Pergamum: ... *where Satan has his throne.*

- historically the greatest city in Asia.
- a university town, not a commercial hub.
- Centre of philosophy and learning.
 - 2nd largest library in the world – 200,000 parchment scrolls.
 - Acropolis – campus for philosophy & debate.

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- historically the greatest city in Asia.
- a university town, not a commercial hub.
- centre of philosophy and learning.
- Centre of medicine.
 - temple of Asclepius – god of medicine (image of a serpent).
 - a place of purported *supernatural* healing.
 - medical school - a place of *scientific* healing.



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- historically the greatest city in Asia.
- a university town, not a commercial hub.
- centre of philosophy and learning.
- centre of medicine.
- Centre of Emperor worship.
 - first city in Asia to win permission to construct temple to Casear. (A.D. 29)
 - successive Emperors had new temples built to them.

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Pergamum: ... where Satan has his throne.

- historically the greatest city in Asia.
- a university town, not a commercial hub.
- centre of philosophy and learning.
- centre of medicine.
- centre of Emperor worship.
- Centre of pagan-Greek worship.
 - temple of Zeus – the greatest of Gk gods “Zeus, the savior”.
 - massive temple 300 metres over the city

The Lord praises them:

I know the place where you live – where Satan has his throne, yet

- *“you have remained loyal to me!*
- *“You have refused to deny me, even when Antipas, my faithful witness, was put to death among you in Satan’s city.”*

In the enemy’s capital, their King praises them for holding fast, and standing firm against the forces arrayed violently towards them.

The Lord rebukes them:

¹⁴ “But I have a few complaints against you.

- You tolerate in your midst those whose teaching is like that of Balaam, who showed Balak how to trip up the people of Israel. He taught them to sin by eating food offered to idols and by committing sexual sin.*
- ¹⁵ In a similar way, you have some Nicolaitans among you who follow the same teaching.*

Specific Issue:

- food sacrificed to idols
- sex outside of heterosexual marriage.

“This letter is from the apostles and elders, your brothers in Jerusalem. It is written to the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia ...

28 “It seems good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay no greater burden on you than these few requirements: 29 You must abstain:

- from eating food offered to idols,*
- from consuming blood or the meat of strangled animals, and*
- from sexual immorality.*

“If you do this, you will do well.

Acts 15

The Problems of the Pergamum Church are internal, not external:

- on the outside, they are faithfully resisting the Empire's persecution, even to the point of death.
- on the inside, they are carelessly indifferent to ideas that just don't seem that bad.

The Lord warns them that thought they are winning the battle that threatens their physical lives, they are in danger of losing the battle that threatens their minds ... and their souls.

REAL ISSUE: ACCOMMODATION

defn. – the act of adjusting things to fit what is comfortable or convenient.

- *“You tolerate sin in your congregation ...”*
Jesus

Truth: Accommodation does not go over well with Jesus, the King ... He simply will not tolerate it.

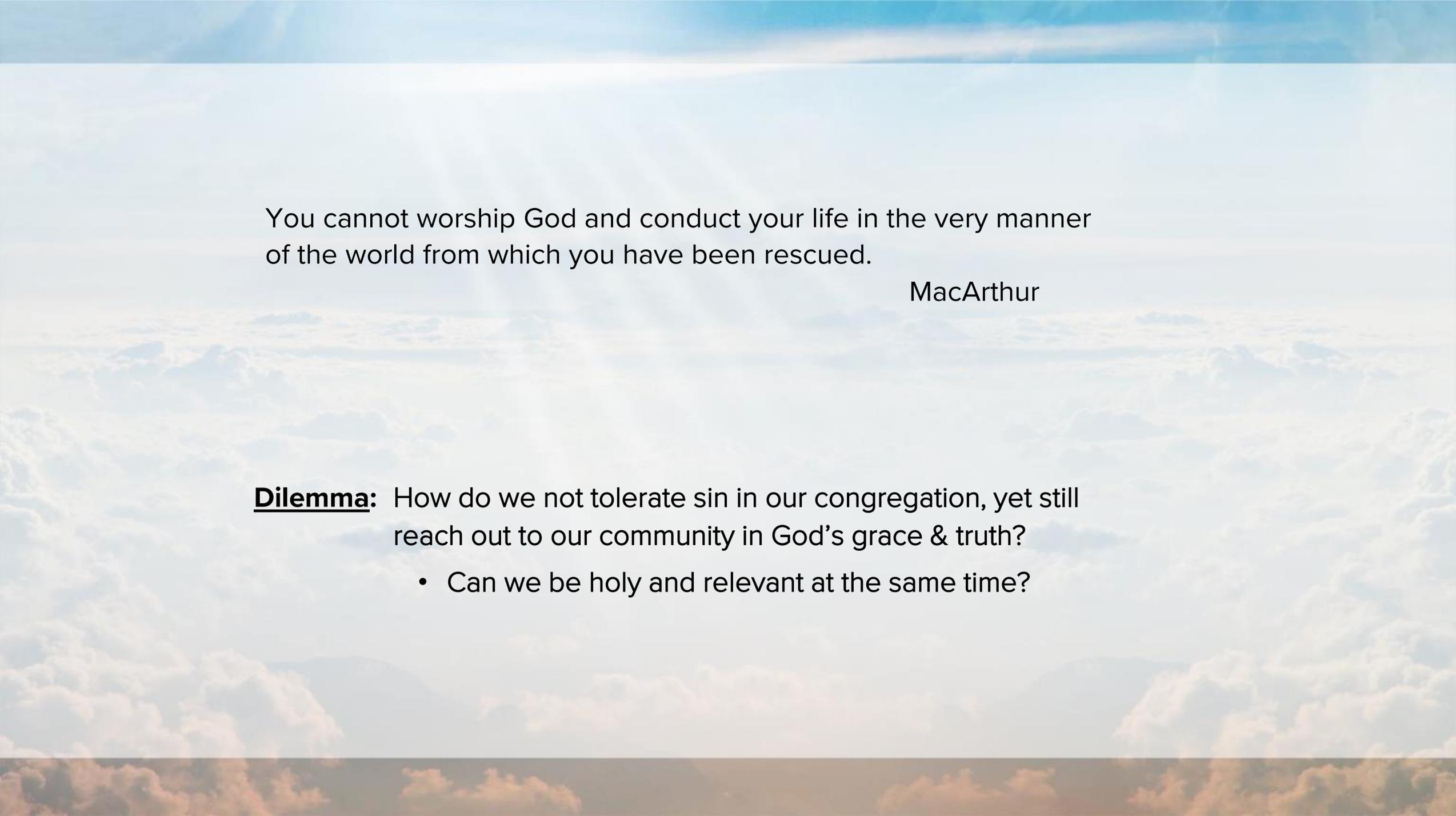
- because accommodation is sin ... God’s ideas no longer guide His Church.
 - He is no longer in charge.

*³ Do not act like the people in Egypt, where you used to live, or like the people of Canaan, where I am taking you. **You must not imitate their way of life.** ⁴ You must obey all my regulations and be careful to obey my decrees, for I am the LORD your God. ⁵ If you do, you will find life through them. I am the LORD.*

Leviticus 18

*² **Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world,** but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.*

Romans 12



You cannot worship God and conduct your life in the very manner of the world from which you have been rescued.

MacArthur

Dilemma: How do we not tolerate sin in our congregation, yet still reach out to our community in God's grace & truth?

- Can we be holy and relevant at the same time?

Principle: We welcome everyone, but we don't affirm everything!

- We welcome everyone in the grace of Jesus Christ ...
- We affirm only what God clearly teaches in His Word...
 - we affirm them with our mouths.
 - we affirm them with our lives.

Tolerance is not a biblical virtue. Patience is. Understanding is.
Civility is. Graciousness is. Mercy is. Humility is but not tolerance.

John Stott

⁶... just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him. ⁷ Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him ...

⁸ Don't let anyone capture you with empty philosophies and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from the spiritual powers of this world, rather than from Christ.

Paul - Colossians 2

In our day, tolerance is exalted as a great virtue, especially on moral and religious matters. However, Jesus is intolerant in these things, because he loves the truth, speaks the truth, is the truth! He knows that falsehood and deception of any kind enslaves people, and he cannot tolerate this. He knows that only the truth can set people free.

Johnson

The Lord warns them:

¹⁶ Repent of your sin, or I will come to you suddenly and fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

*¹⁷ “Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches.” ... **(pay attention!)***

The Lord promises them:

“To everyone who is victorious

- *I will give some of the manna that has been hidden away in heaven.*
 - “I am the Bread of Life” (Jesus)
- *And I will give to each one a white stone, and on the stone will be engraved a new name that no one understands except the one who receives it.”*
 - something that supernaturally identifies the faithful.