

Revelation 2:17 – The Manna, Stone, & New Name?

2:17 The promise to the overcomer includes three difficult symbols: “hidden manna,” “a white stone,” and “a new name.” The “hidden manna” is reminiscent of the manna hidden in the ark of the covenant by Moses (Ex 16:33–34; Heb 9:4). Since Moses’ pot of manna was designed to remind the Israelites of God’s grace and faithfulness in the wilderness (Ps 78:24), there may be a similar thought here. In apocalyptic Jewish teaching, however, the messianic era will see the restoration of the hidden wilderness manna: “And it shall come to pass at that self-same time (in the days when the Messiah comes) that the treasury of manna shall again descend from on high, and they will eat of it in those years” (*2 Bar.* 29:8; *Sib Or.* 7:149). **To those at Pergamum who refused the banquets of the pagan gods, Christ will give the manna of his great banquet of eternal life in the kingdom (Jn 6:47–58).****

The “white stone” is a puzzle. It has been thought of in relation to voting pebbles, an inscribed invitation to a banquet, a victory symbol, an amulet, or a counting pebble. **It seems best to link the stone to the thought of the manna and see it as an allusion to an invitation that entitled its bearer to attend one of the pagan banquets.****

The “new name ... known only to him who receives it” is either the name of Christ himself, now hidden from the world but to be revealed in the future as the most powerful of names (3:12; 14:1), or the believer’s new name or changed character through redemption (Isa 62:2; 65:15). J. B. Pritchard (*Ancient Near Eastern Texts* [3d ed.; Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1969], 12) cites an Egyptian text concerning the goddess Isis, who was plotting to learn the secret name of the supreme god Re to gain his hidden power for herself. The one who knew the hidden name received the power and status of the god who revealed it. Hence the name was jealously guarded by the god. This background would fit the context here in Revelation; **to Christians tempted to compromise their loyalty to Christ to gain the favor of the pagan gods, Christ generously offers himself and the power of his name so that those who have faith in him may overcome.**¹**

****emphasis mine**

¹ Alan F. Johnson, [“Revelation,”](#) in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Hebrews–Revelation (Revised Edition)*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, vol. 13 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 621.