



Connecting
With God
For a Strong Finish

So we'll be Ready when the Time Comes

PART 2

How to Connect with God for Strength

CHAPTER 9

Eat for Strength

The Pergamon Altar—Food, War, and Famine

Jesus appeared to John on the Isle of Patmos. During this exceptionally rare encounter, He detailed progress reports for seven churches in Asia Minor. For the church at Pergamon (also called Pergamum or Pergamos), He issued a strong reprimand involving food and sex. Jesus said:

*"I know where you dwell, **where Satan's throne is**. Yet you hold fast my name, and you did not deny my faith even in the days of Antipas my faithful witness, who was killed among you [likely roasted on the Altar of Pergamon], **where Satan dwells**. But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put **a stumbling block before the sons of Israel**, so that they might **eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality**. (Revelation 2:13-14 ESV)*

The early church fought satanic battles involving two God-given appetites: food and sex. Since dietary and sexual restrictions “*seemed good to the Holy Spirit*”, church leaders required abstinence from food sacrificed to idols, from eating strangled animals or blood, and from

sexual immorality. Luke, a trained physician, describes the consensus of a counsel in Jerusalem, which considered these issues:

For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements: that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell." (Acts 15:28-29 ESV)

Satan established a throne in Pergamon where followers of Christ stumbled in a demonic food fight. Their battle involved eating food sacrificed on the pagan altar of Pergamon (identified by various scholars as the "Seat of Satan"). Perched a thousand feet above the surrounding plain, this ancient Hellenistic stronghold emanated strength and durability. Rubble from this stronghold lies scattered on the coast of western Turkey after Muslim invaders reduced it to ruins.

Between 1878 and 1886, German engineer Carl Humann rediscovered the massive Altar of Pergamon. Salvaging it from local pillagers and miners, he moved this relic to Berlin where Kaiser Wilhelm II celebrated its reconstruction in 1902. As hostilities intensified prior to one of the deadliest wars in history (World War I), Wilhelm approved plans to build a Pergamon Museum to display this pagan altar. Construction lasted for 20 years (between 1910 and 1930), opening its doors just as Adolf Hitler ascended to power before World War II.

During his annual Reichstag rally in Nuremberg, Hitler spoke from the center of an altar-pulpit at the Zeppelintribüne. Architect Albert Speer built this structure using the Pergamon Altar in Berlin as a template. From this replica on September 13, 1935, the Führer ranted over a declared "Jewish problem" where he coined the infamous phrase "final solution". Over 6 million Jews and 5 million Gentiles were thereafter murdered in a genocidal Holocaust, which literally means "whole burnt".

After World War II, the Red Army hauled the Altar of Pergamon to Leningrad, Russia. It remained in the Soviet Union from 1948 to 1959 as

the Cold War intensified. Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev returned this relic to Berlin during the same year that he and U.S. Vice President Richard Nixon staged the “Kitchen Debate”. In a setting optimized for food preparation and consumption, each leader promoted the merits of communism and capitalism respectively on a stage that represented a contemporary American kitchen.

Germany remodeled the Pergamon museum in 1982 establishing the Pergamon Altar as the grand entrance. With 1.3 million guests annually, this exhibit ranked first in Germany and 39th globally before closing for a five-year renovation task scheduled for completion in 2019.

Explicit Warning

On the surface, Satan’s dietary meddling poses little threat to our spiritual well-being. Nonetheless, Satan used forbidden fruit to separate Adam and Eve from God. Satan also targeted Jesus’ appetite during a wilderness fast. For the church at Pergamon, eating food sacrificed to idols triggered a rare personal visitation from Jesus to convey His reproof.

Demonic deception adds supernatural energy to food battles. With strong language, the Holy Spirit warns us today that spiritual warfare will erupt once again over food and marriage.

*But **the Spirit explicitly says** that in later times **some will fall away from the faith**, paying attention to **deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons**, by means of the **hypocrisy of liars** seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, men **who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods** which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth. (1 Timothy 4:1-3 NAS)*

Adam and Eve stumbled over food because they paid attention to a deceitful spirit. The Holy Spirit warns us that Satan’s agenda today involves culinary propaganda with conjugal restrictions.

Catastrophic Famines

Jesus taught His disciples to ask their Heavenly Father for “*daily bread*”. He emphasized this request as a priority in the Lord’s Prayer, because whoever controls the food supply controls the kingdoms of the world.

Since the 15th Century alone, millions of people have died from starvation. Famines occur because of drought, pestilence, volcanic eruptions, war, and targeted starvation by adversarial rulers.¹

Dates	Famines	Nations	Estimated Loss of Life
1601–1603	50% of Estonia	Russia	2 million
1648–1660	Famine and Epidemics	Poland	4 million
1693–1694	Famine	France	2 million
1696–1697	Great Famine of Finland 33% of Population	Finland	150, 000
1702–1704	Famine in Deccan	India	2 million
1708–1711	41% of Population	East Prussia	250,000
1740-1741	Great Irish Famine 38% of Population	Ireland	900,000
1769–1773	Great Bengal Famine of 1770 33%of population	India, Bangladesh	10 million
1770–1771	Famines in Czech Lands	Czech Republic	Over 100,000
1780s	Great Tenmei Famine	Japan	20,000 - 920,000
1783	Caused by Laki Volcanic Eruption	Iceland	1/5 of population
1783–1784	Chalisa Famine	India	11 million
1789–1792	Doji Bara Famine or Skull Famine	India	11 million
1810, 1811, 1846, 1849	4 Famines in China	China	45 million
1815 1816–1817	Tambora Volcanic Eruption Year without a Summer	Indonesia Europe	10’s of thousands 65,000
1837–1838	Agra Famine of 1837–38	India	1 million
1845–1849	Great Famine in Ireland	Ireland	1.5 million
1849–1850	Drought caused 4 successive crop failures in Central Java	Indonesia	83,000
1850–1873	Famine During Taiping Rebellion	China	Part of 60 million wartime casualties
1860-1861	Upper Doab Famine	India	2 million

¹ Table adapted from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_famines(Accessed 12-5-2015)

1866	Orissa famine of 1866	India	1 million
1866–1868	15% of population	Finland, N. Sweden	Over 150,000
1869	Rajputana Famine	India	1.5 million
1870–1871	Famine in Persia	Iran	2 million
1876–1879	Great Famine of 1876–1878	India	5.25 million
1876–78	Chinese Drought India Drought and British policies	India, China, Brazil, N. Africa (others)	18.25 million in N. China and India
1888–1892	Ethiopian Great Famine	Ethiopia	1/3 of population
1891–1892	Famine	Russia	375,000–500,000
1896–1902	Famines in British Territories from Drought and Policies	India	6 million
1907, 1911	Famines in East-Central China	China	25 million
1914–1918	Ottoman Turk Blockade During World War I	Mount Lebanon	450,000; 33% of Maronite Christians
1917–1919	Famine in Persia	Northern Iran	25% of the population
1917–1921	During Bolshevik Revolution	Turkestan	1/6 of population
1921	Famine	Russia	5 million
1924–1925	Volga German colonies in Russia	Russia	33% of population
1928–1930	Northern China due to drought	China	3 million
1932–1933	Famine	Soviet Union and Ukraine	Millions in Russia 7–10 million Ukraine
1936	Famine	China	5 million
1941–1944	900-day German Blockade Winter Temps -40 °C (-40 °F)	Leningrad Russia	1 million
1941–1944	Due to Axis occupation	Greece	300,000
1942-1943	Chinese Famine of 1942–1943	Henan, China	2-3 million
1943	Bengal Famine of 1943	Bengal, India	1.5-7 million
1944-1945	Java during World War II	Indonesia	2.4 million
1944	World War II Dutch Famine	Netherlands	20,000
1945	Vietnamese Famine of 1945	Vietnam	400,000–2 million
1947	Soviet Famine of 1947	Soviet Union	1–1.5 million
1959–1961	The Great Chinese Famine	China	15–43 million
1968–1972	Sahel Drought	Mauritania, Mali, Chad, Niger, and Burkina Faso	1 million
1975–1979	Khmer Rouge Famine, murders, and forced labor	Cambodia	2 million
1996	Famine	North Korea	200,000 to 3.5 million
1998–2004	Starvation and Disease During Second Congo War	Democratic Republic of Congo	3.8 million

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