***Antipas

RV13-02***

Please turn with me in your Bibles once more to Revelation 2:12-17 on the letter to Pergamum. The letter to the local church congregation in Pergamum deals with a church which is moving from persecution to popularity. The spiritual purity of persecution in time gave way to the corrupting influences of acceptability. Historically, this letter represents the gradual contamination of New Testament Christianity by the Babylonian mystery religions. We have been studying the characteristics; the practices; and, the doctrines of that mystery viewpoint – that religious system which had to go underground, and so was called mystery, but which was a creation of Satan and was pure, unadulterated paganism.

We have seen that when Satan could not destroy the testimony of Christianity by persecution, he decided to ruin it from within. Historically, we saw that that is exactly what happened. This church is existing under conditions, at the time that John is writing, which are conducive to compromise; to getting along with the establishment religiously and politically; and, ultimately to have to deny the divine viewpoint that they possess. Once persecution was taken off, it was easier to make the adaptations. Of course, once Christianity became accepted in the Roman Empire, many pagans were forced to become Christians; some of them at the point of the sword – either become Christians, or die. And it was not uncommon to be given that alternative.

Well, the pagans naturally came into Christianity (into the local established organizational church), but they unfortunately brought with them all their old mystery religion practices and viewpoints. It may distress you to recognize that these viewpoints are there. You may even wonder whether all of these things really are connected way back there to what the mystery cults were teaching. I'm sure that the people who practice these doctrines and who believe in these doctrines and who practice these religious rituals today themselves, do not attribute that worship to the same object as did the pagans, of course. When they worship a disc now, whether it's on the top of a monk's head where the hair has been cut off in a circle; whether it's the round wafers they take at the Lord's Supper; whether they observe the mass without a bloodless sacrifice; whether they have the purgatory bit; whether they practice the confessional; or, whether it's everything else that was practiced in the Babylonian system, they attribute this now to God. They do not attribute this to their superman, which has become deified.

I want to stress at this point that what the pagans worshiped in the Babylonian system was human beings who became deified. We're going to get back to that a little later, but I want you to be aware of that in case you missed it: the gods that they spoke of under the Babylonian system (the Nimrod/Semiramis setup) were human beings who had been elevated by one process and another to where they were deified.

This happens to be with us today. Whether you like it or not, these pagan practices are within the amalgamation basically of the Roman Catholic Church. Just before the service this evening, one of our men told me that he had been at a large Episcopalian Church this past week in connection with his work. The Episcopal Church is the same thing as the Roman Catholic Church. They simply do not have a pope. When Henry VIII decided that he wanted to divorce his wife contrary to scriptural grounds and the pope wouldn't agree, he simply kicked the pope out and said, "From now on, I, the king, am head of the church, and you have just lost your job." But everything else went on the same as ever. There's nothing different. The basic viewpoints of Roman Catholicism and the Church of England of the Episcopal Church are the same.

**Holy Water**

One of the things that they have in common from the ancient system, of course, is a thing called holy water. This is ordinary H2O which is taken, and by the process of official ministration is converted into a holy substance which now gives you, again, a merit in the eyes of God. And if you have ever been in a Roman Catholic Church, you will see people walking up to the little fount with water in it, and they dip their fingers in it and put a cross on their head or sprinkle it on themselves in order to take the first step in sanctification – the first step in another gaining of merit toward eternal life.

Our man this week, while in the Episcopal Church, saw the holy water, and the subject came up with the custodian as to what do you do with the water that's left over? Once a Roman Catholic priest follows the mass system of Babylon, and he transforms that little round wafer into the actual body of Christ, supposedly, then that is the body of Christ. He can't ever return that to being just bread again. Therefore, any wafers that are leftover in the Roman Catholic mass must be very carefully preserved in a locked container after the service, because it is the body of Christ. Priests have endangered their lives in church fires to try to rush up to the altar, to tear open the container box, and to get that bread left over from the last mass, because it had already been transformed into the body of Christ, and should not be left to burn in the fire.

What do you think happens to the holy water that's left over? You can't just throw that out. That's now been converted into something different than what you drink, and what you bathe in, and so on. This is holy water. This is a priestly ministration. This water will help you to heaven. Well, the custodian showed our man what they do with it. They have a special drain on top of which is a locked cover. Those who have the keys unlock that box. Then they have holy water to dispose of. This drain does not lead into the sewer. That would not be fitting for holy water that the priest has blessed and changed into such a sacred, useful object. Instead, it has a special drainage that goes directly into the earth, and the holy water is returned to the earth. Since that tube is holy also, and since the hole in which it goes down is holy, and the container is holy, it must be covered so that no one comes is in there and throws unholy water in it. You can imagine the shattering consequences in heaven if somebody dumps some ordinary unholy water down that drain. Can you appreciate the catastrophic results of such a thing? Can you imagine the reverberations? Talk about thunder and lightning on Mount Sinai! Their church would undoubtedly be burned down in a moment.

Now you sit there and smile in disbelieving. You're not quite sure you can believe me, as a matter of fact. That's so preposterous to you because you are oriented to grace. You're oriented to God doing for us, and not us trying to do for ourselves with that kind of gobbledygook foolishness. It's just inconceivable that 20th Americans with accessibility to the Word of God, as we have it, would actually walk into a church; sprinkle themselves with supposedly sacred water; and, that men of the pulpit would actually be running around collecting the leftover holy water to dump down a holy drain. Holy mackerel!

Well, where is all that going to lead to? Well, it's going to lead to just exactly the kind of stuff that we have been reading about. That was the practice of ancient Babylon. Unfortunately, once the pressure of persecution was taken off the church, it then came under the acceptability of society, and then came under the great temptation to start compromising truth with paganism. And by the year 600, the doctrines and the practices of paganism had so permeated the visible church that it bore little relationship to biblical Christianity. It had in fact become the Roman Catholic system that we know today. It had become a mongrel system of biblical Christianity mixed in with paganism.

So where Diocletian, the last persecuting Roman emperor, failed to neutralize the church, Constantine, the first so-called Christian emperor readily succeeded. Where Diocletian, with all of his brutality to Christians, could not cause them to give in and to deny the truth of the Word of God, Constantine, by holding out benefits, was very easily able to begin a movement which, in a few centuries, led to the complete corruption of the visible church, without any relationship to biblical Christianity.

These practices and these doctrines of a corrupted church order continue with us today. Its adherents, as I say, do not attach pagan meanings to what they do, but the system is satanic in origin, and it is satanic in viewpoint nevertheless.

Jesus Christ introduced Himself to the Pergamum church in this letter as the one who has the Word of God as His field of reference in judging the performance of the believers. So He identifies Himself in verse 12 as the one who has the sharp sword with two edges, which we know from Scripture refers to the Word of God. Only Bible doctrine can guide a local church to the mind of Christ. Therefore, the less emphasis that is placed upon doctrine, the greater will be the influx of the world into the local church. The less emphasis there is placed within a congregation on doctrinal understanding, the less understanding there will be within that congregation when the corrupting influences of the world are being brought in.

A congregation cannot spot practices that are contrary to Scripture if they do not understand Scripture – if they do not really know it, and if it is not second nature to them. A congregation should be able just to have red flags fly up in their mind immediately when they are brought in confrontation with an idea that is paganistic that is contrary to the Word of God. Sometimes maybe they can't even put their finger on why it's wrong. But a proposal should ring the bell of error when it is heard. That's what happens if people have been taught the Word of God. So the less emphasis on doctrine, the greater will be the delusion.

When Jesus Christ approaches this church, He says, "My frame of reference is the Word of God, and I'm going to judge you on the basis of the sword of the Word of God." Here, of course, it is viewed as an instrument of judgment. It is an instrument which cuts down, or an instrument which defends. The Lord Jesus Christ expressed full understanding of the difficult place in which these Christians in Pergamum resided. Pergamum, as you'll remember, had become the headquarters of Satan's mystery religions based upon the worship of the sun. After they were driven out of Babylon, they set up headquarters in Pergamum. In time, that headquarters was transferred on to Rome itself. Pergamum, at this time, when John was writing this letter, was the capital of the Roman government in Asia, and the Babylonian paganistic system reigned supreme in the city.

So we're going to begin now again at verse 13, where we have already read, "I know where you dwell, even where Satan's throne is." Satan's throne is referring to his headquarters of the Babylonian system. We've gone extensively into that, so I hope that now you have some idea of what was entailed in that system; what its practices were; and, how really demonic it was.

Picking it up after the opening sentence there: "Even where Satan's throne is, and you hold fast My name." The word "and" is "kai" in Greek. It's a conjunction indicating a continuation now of what he knows about them. This particular section of the letter is commendation. This is where the Lord is telling them the things for which He is pleased with them, and the things for which He can commend them.

He says, "I am pleased with you because you are holding fast." The word "hold fast" is "krateo." "Krateo" means "to hold fast." It really means "to be strong" toward something. It is in the present tense, therefore, that tells us that this was continually true about the Pergamum Christians. It is active voice which tells us that these Christians themselves were holding fast to something, namely the truth. It's indicative mood. It's a fact.

What are they holding fast to? It says, "You're holding fast to My name (My 'onoma')." This is a noun. Here it refers, of course, to the Lord Jesus Christ. This means all that Jesus Christ represents and all that He teaches. His name stands for all that He is; all that He represents; and, all that of the Word of God teaches. The believers in Pergamum, in other words, were occupied with Jesus Christ, and thus they were clear in their outlook. The only way they could be occupied with Jesus Christ was by being occupied with doctrine. You cannot be occupied with Jesus Christ by sitting in a chair and meditating about Him. You cannot be occupied with Jesus Christ by getting on your knees and praying. You cannot be occupied with Jesus Christ in any kind of inspirational, emotional way. You can only be occupied with Him as you learn doctrine, and then meditate upon that. It is the Word of God that enables you to be occupied with Him. When you have the Word of God, you understand what His name stands for and what it represents. Therefore, you have content to be true to.

These people, we're told, held fast His name and then they did not do something. The word "not" should be observed. It's the Greek word "ou" which is the very strong negative. The thing that they did not do was deny something. That's the word "arneomai." "Arneomai" means "to contradict," "to renounce," or "to forsake." That probably is the best translation here: "to forsake." You absolutely did not forsake something. This is in the aorist tense, which is true of the Pergamum believers as a whole. They as a whole did not forsake something. It is middle in form, but it's active in meaning, so it means that they chose not to deny and not to forsake something. Again, it's indicative. It's a statement of fact.

What they did not elect to forsake is described as "my faith," which is the Greek word "pistis." This is a noun. In the Greek, it has the definite article "the" before it, so that it is "the faith." Because we have that, we know that it is stressing Bible doctrine. This is a stress upon what Jesus Christ teaches as opposed to the teachings of the mystery religions. Literally, it says, "The faith of me." This refers to the expressions of biblical faith and the expression of biblical Christianity contained in the statements of doctrine. These people remained true to Bible doctrine in the face of much pressure to compromise on certain points. The mystery religions, in other words, were not dignified by the Pergamum Christians on the whole as being just another approach to God that was equal to Christianity. They did not view the Pergamum Babylonian system as being just another road to try to find God, and that it was just as valuable as Christianity.

These people made it very clear that the Pergamum system of the mystery religions would take you to the lake of fire. The system of biblical Christianity, as represented by the name of Jesus Christ, would take you to heaven. This church is obviously an example to us today in an age that wants Christians to take a tolerant attitude toward homosexuality; toward lesbianism; toward living without marriage; toward the violation of the divine institutions; and, toward the concept of salvation by some work in some ritual. They don't want us to come down too hard upon a religious system that throws a ritual in as part of salvation. It is amazing how many religious leaders will say, "Well, they'll be saved in spite of that." I wonder if they've ever studied the book of Romans that says God only saves by grace. One smattering of human effort, and there is no longer a condition of grace existing. When grace does not exist, God cannot save you. One little bit of salvation by works is all you need to do to destroy your opportunity to go to heaven.

Today, we have the toleration toward an errant Bible, and this, sadly enough, even among people who are biblical Christians. They want us to be tolerant toward the idea that the Bible does have mistakes. They don't want us to come down so hard on the principle of an inerrant Scripture, as the Bible claims for itself. We have people who want us to be tolerant toward the cults. They say that the cults are not so bad. After all, the cults usually consist of very moral people. The charismatic movement: they love the Lord; they praise the Lord; and, they give honor to the Lord. Why should we come down so hard on them just because they're all distorted in corrupted doctrine of the Holy Spirit? Well, for one thing, because if you're wrong on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, you've blown the whole thing. For example, you may even be a believer but be wrong on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and miss the doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. If so, you've blown the whole thing relative to your Christian life. You cannot proceed with one iota of divine good production. If you miss it there, you've missed the whole thing.

Again, God does not adjust Himself to our ignorance. He does not adjust Himself on the basis that if we come close to the truth, then He will function with blessing and prosperity among us. God operates on His integrity, and these people in Pergamum understood that. They looked out at this Babylonian system, and they said, "Hey, God is a God of integrity. He blesses and He prospers on the basis of His integrity. If we violate that holiness, we can expect exactly nothing from Him."

So the Pergamum church is indeed an example to us here when it says, "You did not deny the expression of doctrinal faith. You were true to it." We are very, very much called upon in our day not to be true to what we know is the Word of God. There are no alternate lifestyles in any respect once the Word of God has spoken. There are no alternate lifestyles. If the Bible says that salvation is of grace and not by works, then there's no alternative. It can't be a little bit of this and a little bit of that. It has just spoken, and the issue is settled. That goes all the way through.

"I know where you dwell (Pergamum), the city where Satan's headquarters is now located. And yet you hold firmly fast without compromising My name – all that I stand for as the God-man. And you have absolutely refused on every occasion to forsake true and sound doctrine. Even in those days." And He goes on now to give us specific examples of what He's talking about. The word "even" is again the conjunction "kai" which is indicating now an explanation and an illustration. "Even in." The word "in" is the Greek word "en" which indicates location, and "The end is in the days." The Greek word for "day" is "hemera." "Hemera" refers to a period of time or an era. Particularly here it refers to the period of time of persecution under Emperor Domitian. This is the ruling Flavian emperor when the book of the Revelation was being written. So he's referring to that era of time when he says, "Even in the days of Antipas, my faithful martyr." Domitian was the last of the Flavian line of Caesar. He followed his brother Titus. This is the famous Titus who conquered Jerusalem. The emperor Domitian of the Flavian line ruled from 81 to 96 A.D. So he was on the throne when John wrote this book, and he is the era to which they are referring, because he brought the second greatest persecution upon the Christians.

**Antipas**

The person that he specifically uses as an example is a man named Antipas ("antipas"). All we can say is that Antipas is the name of an early Christian martyr in Pergamum. He was apparently somebody who was well-known. Now tradition does give us some information about this man. The early church writers passed down the traditions which had developed concerning Antipas, and they were to the effect that he was a strong, staunch, outspoken defender of the Word of God. And in the face of the prosecution, and in the face of the attacks of the pagans, he refused to compromise on biblical truth, particularly in reference to the person of Jesus Christ. Consequently, in time, the Roman authorities condemned him to death, and tradition tells us that he was placed in a bronze figure in the shape of a bull, which was hollow. He was placed in this bronze bull; a fire was lit underneath; and, he was roasted alive. While he went into the Lord's presence, he sang hymns to the praise of Jesus Christ.

That, if it is true, is indeed an outstanding example of Pergamum, and we can see why the Lord would say, "I'm going to preserve this man's name in Scripture, because he represents and symbolizes a long line of believers who stood by the authority of the Word of God and refused to compromise." His name actually can be divided into two Greek words. "Anti" is the preposition which means "against," and "pas" is an adjective which means "all." So what does the name Antipas itself mean? It means "against all," which is perhaps significant – that this tells us something about the attitude of a Bible doctrine oriented believer in the face of religious human viewpoint. He is willing to stand against all.

How many solid, uncompromising martyrs over the centuries have followed in the footsteps of Antipas, and have stood indeed against all? They're known only to the Lord himself, but Antipas symbolizes that host of literally millions of believers who have been willing to face persecution and even death at the hands of the pagans. This man is described as "My faithful martyr." The word "faithful" is again our word "pistis" which means he was true to doctrine and thus to the Lord Jesus Christ. And he is called a "martyr," which is the Greek word "martus." This is the Greek word for "a witness in a court of law." You can easily see that we get our English word "martyr" from this. It refers to someone who bears witness to divine viewpoint truth with his death. He bears witness to the point of giving his life to make his point. Basically, it's one who declares what he has seen; what he knows; and, what he has heard.

What the Lord Jesus Christ was, thus, to God the Father, the faithful one, Antipas was to Jesus Christ – His faithful witness. What happened to him? Well, we're told that he was slain. The word "slain" is the Greek word "apokteino." "Apokteino" means "to kill." It refers to physical death. It's in the aorist tense which means there was a point of time when the Roman authorities condemned Antipas to death, and they executed him. It's passive. He didn't kill himself. He was executed by the authorities. It's indicative – a statement of fact.

Who was this man? There's something else that we find about him just from the words of Scripture here. He was "The Lord's faithful martyr who was slain among you." The word "among" in Greek is this preposition "para" which means "by the side of you." In other words, it was a martyr from among themselves. They knew Antipas. This wasn't somebody that they heard about that on the other side of the world someplace was attacked by some hostile natives, and was killed, and you never heard his name before, and you maybe never will hear it again. This was coming into the local church and saying, "Antipas has been taken by the authorities. He's in custody now." This was coming into the assembly for worship and having the pastor-teacher stand up and say, "I'm sorry to announce that Antipas has been executed this afternoon." Everybody knew who it was. It was somebody that they had sat next to in church. It was somebody who was "para" with them. It was somebody who was beside them. It was somebody who was among them. Now that came very much closer to home because these people knew that they believed the same things that Antipas did, and that they stood as firmly as he stood for doctrine. They were opening themselves to the same kind of treatment. This was martyrdom to one of their own.

And where did this take place? He reminds them again that it took place "where Satan dwells." The word "where" is the Greek word "hopou." This is an adverb of place. Of course, it refers to the place of Pergamum again. It is described as the place particularly where "satanas" is. This is, of course, the name for Lucifer, the leader in the angelic warfare. This particular name of Lucifer means "adversary." Here it is a very fitting name to use as one who is antagonistic to Bible doctrine oriented, uncompromising believers. It is again the place where Satan "dwells," which is the word "katoikeo." This "kat" at the beginning of a word intensifies the word. It's that preposition "kata" that means "down," and "oikeo" means "to dwell," so we get the idea "to dwell fixedly;" "to dwell firmly;" or, "to have your roots down." Satan is dwelling in Pergamum in a firmly established position. Satan worship was not just something that some little kooky group on the far north side of the town of Pergamum was engaged in. This was at the heart of the system. The whole city was his headquarters, and the whole city was engaged in this kind of Babylonian religious counterfeit.

At the same time, having said all this, they were under this persecution, and some of them died, and Antipas is an example of that, because they stood firm in a hard place; that is, in the place of Pergamum itself. As we look at church history, again, we find that, out of the same period of time that we're describing here represented by this church, those early centuries of the Christian church after it became popular to become a Christian, some fantastically great Christian leaders arose, and they faced the issues of doctrine in the tradition of Antipas, particularly firm to the person of Jesus Christ. This is where the cults and the religious systems of the world always inevitably go wrong, and that is on the person of Jesus Christ. If Satan can foul them up on that account, then all is lost.

**Arius**

One of the great problems in the early church was Arius, just to give you an example of some of the great things that did come out of this period. Arius came up with the idea that Jesus Christ was not God, but was the highest of God's created beings. The result was that for some centuries there was a debate in the church which centered around two words. The first one is "homoiousios." "Homoiousios" meant "similar in essence." And Arius said that Jesus Christ is "homoiousios" with the Father. He is "similar in essence." But along came biblical oriented Christians who read the Word of God and said, "No, that isn't what the Bible says about Him." The Bible says that Jesus Christ was "homousiois." You will notice that between these two words, only one letter (the iota) is different. Just the letter "i" is different between these two words. But there is a world difference of meaning.

**Athanasius**

Arius came along and said Jesus Christ is "homoiousios." He is "similar in essence." However, another force, represented by a terrific man named Athanasius, led the forces for the biblical doctrine which is "homousiois" – that Jesus Christ is "identical in essence," which is what "homousiois" means – that he is really actually God Himself. The battle raged for some time, and finally the Emperor Constantine himself called the first church council, the Council of Nicaea, in the year 325 A.D., and presided over this himself. So here the church brought together something like 300 bishops (300 leaders of Christianity) on the threshold of becoming an amalgamated system with the Babylonian schism, but yet fighting at this point for doctrinal purity. This question of was he like God, or was he actually God raged back and forth. Finally, Constantine said, "We're going to have a council. We're going to bring in the theologians, and we're going to settle this."

So he sat there as the presiding officer. The thing that was interesting about this was that at the time that he was sitting there, debating one of the great doctrines concerning the person of Christ, he bore the title of Pontifex Maximus. You have already learned that under the Babylonian mystery religious system, that was the title given to the political leader who was also, at the same time, the head of the religious system. So here was the emperor bearing the heathen title of Pontifex Maximus while debating a Christian doctrine. You see why it was so easy eventually for the title Pontifex Maximus to be transferred to the pope, who holds it today, purely out of paganism.

I don't care what you want to say about the fact that the pope does not view himself as the Pontifex Maximus, the chief high priest of the sun-god worship. That's all beside the point. The point is that he holds a title that is purely pagan in its origin, and that the practices consequent to that title are purely pagan in their substance. That's the issue. The practices are pagan in their substance. The practices are evil. I care not what you call them. A rose by any other name will smell as sweet. But if it's a stink weed by any other name, it'll smell as bad. If it's evil, it's going to smell bad. If it isn't (if it's true doctrine), it will smell right.

But I do want you to appreciate this man Athanasius. I'd like to just read a couple of paragraphs to you out of the lectures on Revelation by Dr. Harry A. Ironside, who refers to this man and to the controversies that took place over the doctrine of the deity of Jesus Christ. He says that the issue was finally debated here at this council, and feelings ran very high until a brilliant Arian stood to his feet and gave such a magnificent discourse to prove that Jesus Christ was just human and not God, that he almost silenced all the opposition.

And at that point, Dr. Ironside writes, "The historians have reported for us that a hermit from the deserts of Africa sprang to his feet, clad chiefly in tiger skin. This latter he tore from his back, disclosing great scars, the result of having been thrown into the arena among wild beasts, and his back dreadfully disfigured by their claws, crying dramatically, 'These are the marks of the Lord Jesus Christ, and I cannot hear this blasphemy.' Then he proceeded to give so stirring an address setting forth so clearly the truth as to Christ's eternal deity that the majority of the council realized in a moment that it was indeed the voice of the Spirit of God. Whether this story be actually true or not, I cannot say, but it well sets forth the spirit pervading many who were in attendance, most of whom had passed through the terrible persecution of Diocletian. The final result was that the Council of Nicaea put itself on record as confessing the true deity of our Lord Jesus Christ: very God of very God; light of lights; perfection of perfection; God and man in one blessed person, never more to be separated. Thus was settled, once and forever in a public way, the acknowledged faith of the church of God which held fast His Word and did not deny His name."

Can you imagine where we would be today if the opposite had come about? For what Arius was teaching was what we call today Unitarianism. Jesus Christ would have been purely a human being. He would have been what Arius was teaching, which was what he had really picked up from the Babylonian system: a human being who became deified. That is at the heart of the cult system of our day: deified human beings. Except for faithful leaders like Athanasius resisting the Aryans, Unitarianism would have been approved with monumental destruction and loss to the church over the centuries until it got straightened out.

Athanasius himself was an Antipas against all type of men in his day. Years after the Council of Nicaea had settled the Arian controversy, the Arians stubbornly refused to give in. Finally, they got themselves an emperor (Theodosius) on the throne who was in sympathy with their viewpoint that Jesus Christ was not true God, but was simply a man. So we read that Theodosius the emperor finally called old Athanasius before him in order to rebuke him, because the Arians were irritated by the fact that Athanasius, a leader and authority in this area, refused to permit the Arians to come to the Lord's table. Athanasius said, "When we gather at the Lord's table, we gather to worship the God-man. We gather to remember He who is God, very God of very God, who took upon Himself humanity in order to become a sacrifice, who could bring man and God together. You have no right to stand at this table. You have no right to participate of these elements when you deny that He was God."

Well, the Arians were burned up by this. They finally got Theodosius the emperor to call Athanasius in. Theodosius rebuked Athanasius for his non-subject spirit, and he asked him sternly, "Do you not realize that all the world is against you?" That's kind of interesting that he should say that in view of the fact that Scripture says we want to preserve the name of one great martyr in the Pergamum period, Antipas, whose name literally means "against all." The champion of the truth drew himself up and answered the emperor, "Then I am against all the world."

When you read something like that, you just want to applaud. You want to put the book down, and you want to applaud and say, "Hooray," because that's the kind of an Antipas type man that God honors and respects. "The world is all against you." Did he say, "Oh yeah. Oh, well, I'd better adjust?" That's what the Pergamum church did. But here and there, there was an Antipas that said, "Well, then that means that I'm against the world."

I know Athanasius took a lot of abuse for that attitude of his being against all the world. Athanasius wasn't going to get away with that. There were plenty of people who were going to call him a lot of bad names, and imply a lot of evil things about him. But he was the kind of man that preserved for us biblical truth in a time when the church was compromising to adapt itself to the Babylonian system on all sides. The biblical doctrine of the deity of Christ was never challenged again until the 19th century when modern liberalism came in and tore it to shreds.

**Post-millennialism**

One other thing came in at this time, interestingly enough, in this period when the church was beginning to adapt itself to the pagan viewpoint. One of the things that happened when the pressure of persecution was off was that the leaders of the church, who had gone a long way toward incorporating these various things from the pagan system, began saying to themselves, "You know, now for centuries, since the time of the apostles, we have held to the opinion that Jesus is going to return to this earth to set up a kingdom on this earth, and that He is going to rule on this kingdom." They were premillennialists. And they said, "We have had the idea that Jesus is going to come before the tribulation period." They were pre-tribulational.

And as they looked out upon the scene, they said, "What's going on here? This is a wonderful time. The church has become rich. We no longer walk around in straw sandals. We now walk around in slippers of gold." That's where that song came from in the Middle Ages, "Oh, Dem Golden Slippers," because things had gotten better. Things were moving up. They said, "Wait a minute. What is this thing about a millennium coming down the line? We're in the millennium." And they said, "And furthermore, we, the bishops are the princes of the church, and our pope is his majesty, the spiritual king. What are we talking about? A future millennium?" And the heresy of post-millennialism was born in this era. There was not a whisper of such a notion for the first 250 years of Christianity. But start pushing the year 300, when Christianity now entered an accepted position, in comes post-millennialism, which taught that the world is getting better and better all the time. This idea died hard. Oh, it died so very hard.

The First World War gave it a real stomach blow, and all the preachers who believed that the world was getting better and better got a little shock. But they got straightened out, and got things leveled off, and they were sure it was going to get better and better. And then the Second World War came along, and we had the absolute bestial brutality of Nazism, and what it did to the Jews and people all over the world in the concentration camps. And men shook their heads and they said, "You know, I don't think the world is getting better. I think it's really worse than it used to be." Suddenly postmillennialism was dead – just dead. But, oh, it died so hard. Even after the war, I remember being in the university in Bible classes, and hearing the professor talk about: "Now peace has been brought through all the world. The United States is powerful all over the world. A new era of gospel entrance will be given to us, and all the world will now become enlightened. We will now be able to reach forward to those glorious days that the Bible speaks of." When I raised my hand and suggested that that's an old story that had been demonstrated indeed by two wars to be false, I was cut down as being just a dumb student who didn't know anything.

The Second World War finished post-millennialism, but some people still did not say, "The premillennialists are right. The world is going to get worse and worse until it comes to a catastrophic end. That's what the Bible really teaches. When it really gets all torn to shreds, then Jesus Christ is going to come back. Then He has His millennium." The postmillennialists had taught that the world was going to get better and better, and finally, 1,000 years of wonderful goodness will pass, and then Jesus will come. The whole idea of a better world was compromising with the truth because the world doesn't like to think of itself as getting worse. The world likes to think of itself as getting better. This was a time represented by the Pergamum letter when they had it all together. But because they could not keep from wanting to be accommodating and acceptable to their society, they lost it all.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

[**Back to the Revelation index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/revelation.htm)

[**Back to the Bible Questions index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/allarticles.htm)