

Shadows Of Christ & His Bride

Lesson #31

Church in Pergamos > Hold Fast & Don't Deny

August 21, 2024

Our lessons refer to the coming 1000-year Millennial Kingdom of Jesus Christ on the earth. I believe God has a 7,000-year plan to deal with mankind before eternity. The last 1,000 years will be the coming kingdom of Jesus Christ. Earth will be as in the Garden of Eden. The curse will be removed from the earth and the animals. Satan will be chained in the abyss. Untold millions of people will be born who need to come to salvation in Jesus Christ. We are not referring to eternity.

The Compromising Church: Rev. 2:12-17 And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword: ¹³ "I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. And you hold fast to My name and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. ¹⁴ But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. ¹⁵ Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth. ¹⁷ "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him that overcomes will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knows saving he that receives it.

I Tim. 4:1-2 Now the Spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;

Two basic forms of apostasy:

1. A falling away from key and true doctrines of the Bible into heretical teachings that claim to be "the real" Christian doctrine,
2. A complete renunciation of the Christian faith resulting in a full abandonment of Christ.

The first form of apostasy starts with a denial of key Christian truths such as the divinity of Christ. This begins a downhill slide into a full departure from the faith.

MacArthur: No believer sets out to become an apostate. It is never the result of one abrupt, drastic turn away from the Lord. Instead, apostasy is most often the product of a pattern of sinful compromises that harden and gradually steer a professing believer away from the truth. Heb. 3:12 Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.

John Stott: The essence of apostasy is changing sides from that of the crucified to that of the crucifier.

Francis Schaeffer: Apostasy must be called what it is: spiritual adultery.

Christians understand most unsaved people hold a secular, humanist, self-centered, relativist, or evolutionary worldview. Their beliefs may be sincerely held and ardently supported, but it doesn't matter how many people are for or against something when they're wrong.

Truth is not decided by a show of hands or headcount. God does not rule by consensus.

The only opinion that matters in all endeavors of human existence is "What does God think?"

Wiersbe: The first test of any religious teacher is: "What do you think of Jesus Christ?"

Is He God come in the flesh?" [John 1:14] Anyone who denies this cardinal doctrine is a false teacher NO MATTER how correct he may be in other matters.

John 8:58 Jesus said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."

John 10:30 I and My Father are one."

Jesus Himself proclaimed His self-existence and eternity.

John 1:1-2 tells us that Jesus was "in the beginning with God."

Pergamos, a growing church, was waging an uncompromising war at the throne of Satan.

This church operated in the middle of a city chosen by Satan as his headquarters on earth.

It symbolized secular power and civil religion working together to accomplish Satan's plan.

They were doing well enough to be commended. "I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is and you hold fast My name and did not deny My faith."

Results from revisionist history claimed that Christ's deity was invented at the Council of Nicaea in the 4th century and not something believed by the early church.

Questions: Was Jesus truly God in the flesh or a created being?

Is Jesus of "like substance" with the Father or of the "same substance" as the Father?

Arianism - A heresy regarding Deity of Jesus Christ after Constantine recognized the Church in AD 313.

Root Problem: Arius, a presbyter (priest) from Libya announced, Jesus is not really God.

The Father existed before the Son. There was a time when the Son did not exist.

Therefore, the Son was created by the Father.

"If the Father begat the Son, then he who was begotten had a beginning in existence, and from this it follows there was a time when the Son was not."

Therefore, although the Son was the highest of all creatures, he was not of the essence of God.

- The net result of Arius' teaching was to reduce the Word (Jesus) to demigod.

This View: *Jesus was not fully divine* although still related to God as a son to a father.

He contended that Jesus Christ was a created being. Arius, given his view of God, logically concluded the following 5 things about the relation of God to Jesus:

- The Son or the Word of God is not divine but created by God as the first act of creation. Jesus was the crowning glory of all creation.
- The Son is not self-existent and cannot be God.
- As a creature the Son or the Word must have had a beginning.
- The Son can have no communion with, and indeed no direct knowledge of, His Father.

➤ The Son must be liable to change and even sin [*treptos; alloiotes*].
He Himself was no more than a creature in relation to God, the Father.
The controversy came to be expressed by two Greek words:

- *homoousias*: the Son is of the same essence as the Father
- homoiousias*: the Son is of similar essence as the Father

Result: The controversy spread all over the empire. Arius was clever and did his best to get the people on his side, even going so far as to compose little songs that taught his theology, which he tried to teach to everyone who would listen. His winsome nature, asceticism, and revered position as a preacher also contributed to his cause. Christians could be heard singing a catchy tune that championed the Arian view: "There was a time when the Son was not."

In every city, wrote a historian, "bishop was contending against bishop, and the people were contending against one another, like swarms of gnats fighting in the air."

When it comes to efficacy, His death is sufficient for the whole world. He purchased even those who reject Him and deny Him! This makes their condemnation even greater.

They deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

They teach damnable heresies which deny the Person of Jesus Christ and His finished work on the cross. This is a matter of life and death!

Difference between salvation and condemnation

They deny He is the promised Messiah.

They deny His physical death, resurrection and ascension.

They deny the sacrificial atonement which He accomplished at Calvary.

They deny His promised return to punish His enemies and reward the righteous.

They deny Christ as their Master by seeking to diminish His nature.

He is not the Son of God. He is a good man, a prophet, etc.

They deny the inspiration of the Bible.

They deny the sinfulness of man.

Depart from the Faith: The majority of the church justifies sin and then persecutes, ridicules and demonizes those who preach God's truth and those who stand for God's truth.

A heretical belief becomes a heretical teaching that splinters and grows until it pollutes all aspects of a person's faith. Satan's end goal is accomplished, which is a complete falling away from The Faith that was once delivered to the saints.

Jude 1:3 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation,
it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that

you should Earnestly Contend For The Faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

Challenge From: Athanasius - Fought for Deity of Jesus Christ

Athanasius, a renowned Christian theologian, Church Father, the chief defender of Trinitarianism against Arianism, was the 20th bishop of Alexandria, and served 45 years [June 328 - May 373].

He fought against Arius, arguing his view denied the Trinity.

- Christ is not of a like substance to God, but the same substance.

To Athanasius this was not splitting of theological hairs. Salvation was at issue: only one who was fully human could atone for human sin; only one who was fully divine could have the power to save us. To Athanasius, the logic of New Testament doctrine of salvation assumed the dual nature of Christ. If Christ does not share an eternal Godhood with the Father, then our salvation would be impossible for creature cannot redeem creature. "Those who maintain 'There was a time when the Son was not' robbed God of His Word, like plunderers."

Constantine Gets Involved: Word of the dispute made it to the newly converted Emperor Constantine the Great, who was more concerned with seeing church unity than theological truth. "Division in the church," he told the bishops, "is worse than war."

He feared the church dispute would cause disorder within his empire. To settle the matter, Constantine called the Council of Nicea, first general council of the Christian church, in 325 AD. Of the 1800 bishops he invited, about 300 came [all expenses paid].

Constantine's Charge To the Council: Define the nature of God For All Of Christianity and eliminate confusion, controversy, and contention within the church.

Enter: Athanasius attended the Council of Nicea at 27 years of age. His quotes:

- "Jesus that I know as my Redeemer cannot be less than God."
- "He became what we are, so He might make us what He is."

The Arian view was presented by Eusebius of Nicodemia, who was quite confident that once the Arian view was clearly and logically stated, the Council would overwhelmingly vote for them. He stated how the Son was created out of nothing from the Father and different in nature and essence from the Father. The reaction was not acceptance; it was considered blasphemous. "Eusebius was shouted down ... his speech snatched from his hand, torn to shreds, and trampled underfoot."

The Bishops argued, fought, and eventually wrote out an early version of the Nicene Creed.

Nicene Creed that affirms Christ's divinity: "We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten of his Father, of the substance of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father."

II John 1:9 Whosoever transgresses, and abides not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God.

He that abides in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.

Ruling of the Council:

1. The Lord Jesus Christ, as the Scriptures teach, was the same substance as the Father, God of very God.
2. They affirmed the apostles' teaching regarding the person of Christ > the one true God & the Second Person of the Trinity, with the Father and the Holy Spirit.
3. Arianism was condemned > false doctrine

4. The council, led by Alexander, condemned Arius as a heretic, exiled him, and made it a capital offense to possess his writings.

Athanasius: Over 17 years were spent in 5 exiles ordered by 4 different Roman emperors. There were 6 more incidents when he fled Alexandria to escape people seeking to take his life. He became known as "Athanasius contra mundum" > Athanasius against the world. Yet in the end, his theological enemies were "exiled" from the church's teaching, and it is Athanasius's writings that shaped the future of the church. Athanasius died in 373; he never saw the final victory of his lifelong cause. The church will always be indebted to the good fight he fought in protecting The Christological view of Scripture.

Jesus commended Pergamos for "holding fast the name and the faith of the Lord Jesus; the name of the One who is God's Son and God the Son. It's no coincidence that during this church period this Arian controversy was raging. With all the faults there may have been in Pergamos - praise God, they held fast to the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ!

New Testament teaches: Jesus the Messiah should be worshipped; He is co-equal with God. Col. 2:18; Rev. 22:8-9 Forbids the worship of angels but commands the worship of Jesus. Col. 2:9; 1:19 Paul tells us "in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form." Rom. 10:9-13 Paul declares Jesus as Lord and the One to whom a person must pray for salvation. Rom. 9:5 "Jesus is God overall" Titus 2:13 Jesus is our God and Savior Faith in Jesus' deity is basic to Paul's theology. John 1:1-5;9 Jesus is the divine, eternal Logos, the agent of creation; source of life and light John 14:6 the "the Way, the Truth, and the Life" I John 2:1-2 our advocate with the Father Rev. 1:5 the Sovereign Rev. 22:13 The Son of God from the beginning to the end Consider: A false Jesus cannot save you. If we do not get the identity of Jesus correct, we will die in our sin.

John 8:24 I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins:
for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.

John 11:25-26 Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:
And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?

Key: Today, we must denounce all attacks and "hold fast to the name of Jesus Christ."

- It is vital to get Jesus' identity correct because if we deny the deity of Jesus Christ, Then we do not have God the Father.
- Arianism will destroy the church destroy man's hope for a glorious final destiny.

- If Jesus Christ is no more than a good man, then the bridge from God to man does not exist.
- Jesus' death is no more than a martyrdom & His resurrection no more than a symbol.
- If this is true, man is still separated from God, his soul cannot be saved & he is forever alienated from his heavenly home.

Rev. 2:13 I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

Consider: Faith is tested so it might be proven to be genuine. A faith that cannot endure trial is really no faith at all. True faith is not fragile, it is indestructible.

It survives everything, even the onslaughts of hell.

According to church tradition Antipas, a contemporary with the Apostles, lived during the reign of emperor Domitian in 83 AD. He was consecrated bishop of Pergamos by the Apostle John.

1. Church tradition says Antipas was a physician suspected of secretly propagating Christianity. The Aesculapeans [the medical guild] accused Antipas of disloyalty to Caesar.

2. When he was old, he was caught by the idolaters of Pergamos. The demons, whom they worshipped, appeared to them and told them they could neither live in that place nor accept their sacrifices because Antipas was forcing them out.

Renner: "He had cast out so many devils the demons had been complaining to pagans, saying, 'You've got to do something about this Antipas'."

3. The pagan priests went to the Roman governor and complained that the prayers of Antipas were driving their spirits out of the city and hindering the worship of their gods.

4. As punishment, the governor ordered Antipas to offer a sacrifice of wine and incense to a statue of the Roman emperor and declare that the emperor was "lord and god." He refused.

5. When the governor and the Greeks heard this answer, they burned with anger.

6. Antipas was sentenced to death on the Altar of Zeus.

Acropolis rises triumphantly over the ruins of the city.

1. One of the most dramatic structures of the acropolis was what scholars believe to be the Temple of Zeus, supreme ruler of the gods. The altar to Zeus was one of the most significant places of worship in Anatolia (or Turkey). Zeus, said to have been born in Pergamos, represents the strongest and most powerful of deities; he was to be feared and served.

He could control and manipulate other gods. The emperors and all other deities were subject to his power as well. Thus, Zeus has always been a significant deity worshiped by political leaders who need power and control to remain in their positions.

His altar stood on a hill 1,000 feet high, which rose behind the town.

800 feet up, a ledge jutted out from the mountain, and on it stood the altar of Zeus.

Only the massive foundations remain on the southern slope of the site. 125'x115'x 50' tall.

All day long this altar smoked with the smoke of endless sacrifices. It dominated the city, like a pillar of cloud by day and a column of fire by night. "It was one of the darkest, eeriest cities in the whole Roman Empire. The city reeked with the stench of its heathenism; evil hung in its streets like a clammy fog." Looked like a "Satanic" throne and reflected a false religion.

At the top of the altar was a hollow bronze bull, designed for human sacrifice. Antipas was placed inside a red-hot bronze bull and was roasted alive. Renner describes the method of execution suffered by Antipas. "They would take the victim, place him inside the bull, and they would tie him in such a way that his head would go into the head of the bull. Then they would light a huge fire under the bull, and as the fire heated the bronze, the person inside of the bull would slowly begin to roast to death. As the victim would begin to moan and to cry out in pain, his cries would echo through the pipes in the head of the bull so it seemed to make the bull come alive." Note: Even in the midst of the flames, the elderly bishop Antipas died praying for his church. The year was AD 92. A few years later, the Apostle John wrote Revelation, mentioning the death of Antipas in Pergamum.

Rev. 2:13b *did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.*

Jude 1:3 I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.

Antipas means "against all" and he stood against all odds for the faith that was once and for all handed down to him by the Apostles.

On April 11 the memory of the martyr Antipas, Bishop of Pergamos is still celebrated by the Orthodox Churches around the world.

Why do some Christians accept cultural shifts and try to fit in? Fear, faithlessness, and ignorance. If you stand for nothing, you will fall for anything. People with no biblical Christian worldview often follow the crowd, some out of a desire to fit in, others out of ignorance. Both have nothing on which to depend when questions arise that they don't understand or have never faced. What should I do if...?

As Christians with a biblical worldview, our automatic response should be, "What does the Bible say? What is God's perspective?" We know what is right because the Bible addresses right and wrong in every possible context: religious, societal, interpersonal, and governmental.

Christian life does not guarantee an absence of trials and tribulations. It does not offer us a life where we won't encounter failures and pains. But it offers that we will never have to walk alone amidst any of these. When our burdens increase, God will supply us with strength. In afflictions, God will shower His mercy upon us. When we feel that we cannot take any more, God is willing to take over because His power has no boundary.

All the hurdles we encounter and all the obstacles we face have a divine purpose:
We may be transformed into the likeness of the Son of God, Jesus Christ.
We need only submit ourselves before a loving, merciful and powerful God.

Rom. 12:1-2 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

² And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

When I stand before Jesus Christ at the Judgment Seat of Christ, will He commend me:

- I held fast to His name.
- I did not deny the Faith.

The King is coming for His Bride who has made herself ready and is watching for His return.