

Study for the Month April 2012

The Seven Churches of Revelation

THIS MONTH'S FOCUS: PERGAMOS

***The Age or Church of Compromise; may also be called the church's
Age of Popularity. Time Period: 313- 538 A.D.***

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We reiterate a summary of the relationship of Jesus with the church of the New Testament dispensation and the specific messages for each period and condition of each of the seven churches.

The relationship of Jesus with the church. He, “who never slumbers nor sleeps,” and knows the end from the beginning, calls His true church “the apple of His eye,” is constantly connected and concerned with the church.

1. Ephesus: He is walking among the candlesticks. Christ's promise: I will come to you. Chapter 2: 5
2. Smyrna: One who died and lives again. Christ's promise: I will give you a crown of life. Ch. 1: 10
3. Pergamos: On with a sword sharpened on both edges. Christ's promise: I will come to you soon. Ch. 2: 16
4. Thyatira: One who had the appearance of eyes like a flame and feet shining like brass. Christ's promise: Hold fast. . . . till I come. Ch. 2: 25
5. Sardis: One with seven stars in His hands. Christ's promise: I will come as a thief [to those unfaithful and unprepared only]. Ch. 3: 3.
6. Philadelphia: One with a key in His hand. Christ's promise: I am coming soon. Ch. 3: 11.
7. Laodice: The patient and true Witness. Christ's promise: Behold, I stand at the door and knock. Ch. 3: 20.

The declarations of the spiritual conditions that matched the conditions of the church to which it was sent:

1. Ephesus—had left its first love, i.e., her former zeal.
Christ, the divine Lover comes walking by to attract her attention
2. Smyrna – whose members were mercilessly slaughtered by the Roman emperors who demanded worship as gods.
Christ, who was killed and lived again, will come to resurrect those martyrs and give them a crown of life, or more accurately, the “crown that is called life eternal.”
3. Pergamos – had battled the forces of evil and apostasy.

Christ comes with a sword in His hand to battle with them against the forces of evil.

4. Thyatira – those who had lived under the evil and cruel influence of Jezebel (spiritual symbol of the papal Roman church) of unrestrained spiritual adultery—which was the union of church and state.

Christ, the Prince of light comes, His eyes burning with heavenly light and His feet with the glory of the gospel truth. The Prince of light lets the light of truth shine even during the midnight experience of the Dark Ages through the martyrs.

5. Sardis – One who came almost unnoticed to this world holds his church “like a baby “until its first cry”—the “midnight cry” of the parable of the ten virgins. For the Sardis church, this cry of the second advent was heard throughout the world—Robert Fox in Europe, William Miller in America, etc.
6. Philadelphia – they had to pass through the “door of opportunity,” i. e., Christ had “opened a door which no man can shut, and closed a door which no man can open.” The door to the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary had been opened for Christ to begin His closing work of atonement and investigative judgment in 1844. Also, one with the right key comes to open up new opportunities for the church, particularly the work of sanctification.
6. Laodicea – is both complacent and worldly-wise, unaware that she is actually Spiritually “wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked” in the scales of heaven. Yet Christ, the Faithful Witness, comes to seek each wandering sheep to bring back to the fold. He knocks on the door of the heart, and anyone who hears His voice and lets Him in, will not perish.

THE NAME AND TIME PERIODS OF THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF REVELATION CHAPTERS 2 AND 3. Each church had a unique and specific characteristic.

1. Ephesus – The Apostolic Church, the first, or most desirable stage—31 A.D. to 100 A. D. It was a church of doctrinal purity as John was its first patriarch till his death about 96 or 97 A.D. , but which diminished in enthusiasm and zeal towards the end.
2. Smyrna – The Persecuted Church – 100 A.D. to 113 A.D. Believers were persecuted and martyred for refusing to worship the Roman emperors as gods.
3. Pergamos/Pergamum – The Compromising Church – 31 .A.D. to 538 A.D.
4. Thyatira – The Dark Ages Church – 538 A.D. to 1755 A.D. The light of truth almost ceased to shine as the papacy attempted to destroy through the faithful as heretics using the Inquisition.
5. Sardis – The Reformation Church – 1517 A.D. to 1755 A.D. This was the period of spiritual awakening.
6. Philadelphia – The Second Advent Church – 1755 to 1844. A period of the flourishing of the American and British Bible Societies. The long-forgotten message of Christ’s second advent begun to be preached again.
7. Laodicea – The Church today – 1844 to the end of probation time. This church is described as self-satisfied and materialistic – “I am rich with goods and have need of nothing.” This is also a perfect description of the Christian church in the Western Hemisphere.

The Messages to the Seven Churches:

1. Two receive commendation and *no condemnation*, namely:
 Smyrna (the age of the Persecuted Church, 100-113 A.D.)
 Philadelphia, (the Second Advent church or Brotherly Love age, 1755-1844 A.D)
2. Two receive one condemnation and no condemnation, namely:
 Pergamos (the church or age of Compromise, 313-113 A.D.)
 Laodicea (Today's church, Lukewarm age, from 1844 to close of probation)
3. The other three are a mixture of both, i.e., they are first commended, then condemned for specific sins.

THE PERGAMOS CHURCH

And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write: These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword. I know your works, and where you dwell, where Stan' throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, to taught Balak to put a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and commit sexual immorality 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. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it. Rev. 2: 12-17.

“The Pergamos period of church history may be thought of as beginning about the time of the [Roman] emperor Constantine espoused the cause of the church. In A.D. 313---or his own professed conversion in 323 A.D.---and ending in 538. It was during this period of time that the Papacy consolidated its position as the religious and political leader of Western Europe, and that Satan established his ‘seat’ [of usurped authority] within the Christian church. The papacy was a skillful blend of paganism and Christianity.”-
Footnotes, E.G. White Comprehensive Commentary on Revelation, Vol.II.

“Pergamum had distinguished itself in 29 B.C. by becoming the site of the first cult worship of a living emperor. A temple was built and dedicated to the joint worship of the goddess *Roma* (a personification of the spirit of the Roman empire) and the Emperor Augustus. At the very time John wrote these words Christians were suffering persecution for refusing to worship the Emperor Domitian (A.D. 91-96), who insisted on being worshipped as ‘lord and god.’ Pergamum was also the religious capital of Asia Minor. It was the center of Oriental mystery religions transplanted from Mesopotamia, and contained many pagan temples. Its designation as the place ‘where Satan’s seat was thus appropriate indeed.”- *Ibid.*

Here was also found the altar to Zeus, and just outside the city, the famous shrine to Aesculapius, the god of medicine, obviously a counterfeit of Christ, the divine Physician and Master Healer. According to Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 1942 edition, **Zeus** was the Greek *Dios*, akin to the Latin Jupiter.

“Zeus was the chief of the Olympian gods, son of Cronus and Rhea, and husband of Hera, identified by the Roman with Jupiter. The most primitive character of Zeus is probably as ‘god of the elements;’ the thunderbolt is his sign, the rainbow, *Iris*, his messenger. Zeus is also god of moral law and order, protector of suppliants and punisher of guilt.’ Zeus, in Greek mythology, is considered the supreme god, father of the human race, identified by the Roman as Jupiter; the sky and weather were in his special care, and all mountains were sacred to him. His home was on the summit of Olympus, and the chief shrine in Dodona.”

Not only was Zeus, and the emperors venerated as gods, but **Constantine** in particular, is hailed by the Christian world as a hero of the cause of the church. As I pointed out in my previous study on this subject, “Many venerated historians, both secular and religious, who are ignorant of the true nature of the great controversy between Christ and Satan [and the plan of salvation taught in the sanctuary doctrine], as clearly taught in the Bible (yet lack the humility to acknowledge this deficiency), hail Constantine as a hero of Christianity!” Nothing can be farther from the truth. In fact, he was the one who engineered the first step towards the prophesied “falling away” of the church, accomplishing it through compromise. Apostle Paul, in his day, warned the young church “not to be shaken or troubled that Christ would not be coming in their time because “that day shall not come, except there be a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.” 2 Thess 2: 1-4. But there are also Bible students, theologians, and ministers of other denominations and faiths whom the Holy Spirit is guiding and inspiring to preserve the knowledge of these testing truths for the last days.

Halley’s Bible Handbook (Zondervan Publishing) says of the Edict of Milan that (all emphasis mine):

“The persecutions ended in 313 with the Edict of Milan, issued by Emperor Constantine. Unlike Diocletian, Constantine saw Christianity as an ally to help save the empire and Greco-Roman culture. When he and his army had nearly been crushed by enemies, Constantine reportedly had a vision of a cross with the words *In hoc signo vinces* (‘In this sign conquer’) on it. He took this as a favorable omen, defeated his enemies, and took control of the state

After the Edict of Milan, the Roman empire favored the church; there was freedom of worship, confiscated property was returned to Christians, and clergy was exempted from public service. *Eventually the church was subsidized by the state, and Sunday was made the official day of rest and worship.*

Constantine continued to be chief priest of the pagan state and was not baptized until just after his death [by sprinkling, not by Biblical immersion]. But with the exception of one setback, under Emperor Julian, Constantine’s successor, Christianity continued on its way to become the official state religion. *This meant that the state would be involved in attempting to settle the internal problems faced by the church.*” – pp. 981, 982.

Webster’s Unified Dictionary & Encyclopedia, 1960 edition says:

“Constantine the Great, 278-237, was the illegitimate son of Constantius I, and on his father’s death was proclaimed emperor, 306. After six years of disputes with various contestants, Constantine acquired supreme power of the west by his defeat of Maxentius near Rome when he [allegedly] saw the Cross in a vision. He secured toleration for Christianity 313, and 324 overthrew Licinius, emperor of the East. He moved his capital from Rome to Byzantium, 330, and *made Christianity the state religion.* After further victories Constantine died at Nicomedia, receiving Christian

baptism [by sprinkling, which is not Biblical, but pagan] before his death. He imposed an absolute monarchy, hereditary in his line, upon the Empire, replaced the Senate by a new aristocracy, and separated civil from military administration. His son, Constantius II (316-340), disputed the division of the empire with his brothers, Constans and Constantius, and was killed while invading Italy. Of the remaining emperors with the name, **Constantius XI Paleologus**, 1448-1453, the last emperor of East [Roman empire], was forced to surrender Constantinople to the Turks, 1453.”

www.sabbathchurch.org/Constantine.html adds:

“Constantine I, called the Great. [His] full name was Flavius Valerius Aurelius Conastanatianus. He was the eldest son of Constantius Chlorus; accompanied Diocletian in expedition to Egypt (296); proclaimed successor (Caesar) by his father at York, Britain (306); at the time one of 6 claimants to the throne of the Roman Empire; caused the death of Maximian in 306 for conspiracy; became sole emperor of the West on defeating Maxentius in 3 battles, the last at the Milvian Bridge (312) at Rome; on this occasion legend states that a cross and the words *ad hoc signo vinces* (‘by this sign thou shalt conquer’) appeared in the heavens; at that time (or earlier) adopted Christianity; issued with Licinius the Edict of Milan (313) extending the rights and toleration of Christians; devoted the next 9 years (314-323) to administration, strengthening of frontiers, and restraining barbarians; built Arch of Constantine (315) at Rome; attempted to suppress schisms in the [Roman Catholic] church, especially of the Donatists. After defeating (324) and executing (325) Licinius, ruled as sole emperor; renamed Byzantium Constantinople (330). Called the great Council of Nicea (325) at which the Nicene Creed was adopted; banished Arius and attempted to suppress Arianism.”—Infopedia.

“What the article does not explain is how he introduced **Christmas** to the Romans. After his [alleged] vision of the cross, he contacted some Christian bishops to learn the religion of the cross. He liked what the bishops told him and included Christ as part of his pantheon. He also attempted to convert the Roman Empire to this new religion, Christianity. They adamantly refused. Why? They refused to give up their great festivals, particularly **Saturnalia**.

“In order to convert the Empire to ‘Christianity,’ Constantine, with the help of the Bishops, changed the name only of the feast of Saturnalia (from the pagan God Saturn) to Christmas, Christ Mass (whatever that means) because the Romans refused to give up their holiday with gift-giving, family gatherings and dinners and ‘official’ orgies. Aside from erroneously claiming that late December was Christ’s birthday, Christmas largely remains Saturnalia with a new name, except that the bishops added to Saturnalia some emotional reference to Jesus’ birth in the manger. Romans made idols, crèches of the manger scene as befitting their pagan roots.

“The Louvre has a statue of a little fat god with a large bushy beard and chubby cheeks. If someone would dress the statue in a red suit, it would look just like Santa Claus. The statue, however, was not Santa Claus but the [pagan] god, Saturn. Christmas cannot be made into something other than its original intent, even with a new name and motifs.

“About two years before he died, Constantine established Sunday as the day of worship because the sun was his favorite god. This was not difficult to understand because the Romans had a pantheon of gods in their religion. These gods often became saints in the liturgy. The pantheon, the temple dedicated to all the Roman gods, became

the church called Santa Maria and Martyres. Around the temple-church are statues from the Roman era with saints' names.

“Constantine’s Council of Nicaea established [the] Trinity, a concept of paganism for thousands of years, to Catholicism during its sessions. At the time, and one of the major reasons for the Council, was a dispute among three groups---monotheists, dualists, and Trinitarians. Constantine believed that Jesus was a god, like all kings in pagan philosophy. He considered himself a demigod, who would eventually reside in the heavens after his death. Arians believed that there was one God, the Father. And most of the bishops believed there were three persons in God, Trinitarians.”

Christian Edwardson, in *Facts of Faith*, Southern Publishing Association, Nashville, TN, 1943, pp. 36, 109-115 points out additional facts regarding Constantine and how church power and state power merged---not for the sake of propagating the truth as it is in Jesus but for self-serving, evil purposes on both sides, and prosecuted with strife and bloodshed clearly revealing their unChristlike spirits, motives, and actions---even among rival bishops, all claiming they were representatives of God!

“After Constantine had removed the seat of the empire from Rome to Constantinople, the Roman people were (at intervals) ruled from the Eastern capital, until the pope had grown to power in Rome. While the papacy was gradually gaining control over the people of the West, the Eastern emperors were courting the good will of the popes in order to hold their Western subjects.

“From the time of Constantine to Justinian there was a deadly struggle between the two largest factions of the church—the Catholics and the Arians. Often there was terrible strife, and even bloodshed. The streets of Alexandria and Constantinople were deluged with blood by the partisans of rival bishops.’—*H.H. Milman, History of Christianity, Book III, chap. 5, p. 240, NY: 2 vol-ed., 1881.* Most of the barbarous nations into which the Roman Empire was now split had accepted the *Catholic* faith. But the Heruli, the Vandals, and the Ostrogoths were Arians.

“Constantine had been watching, he said, those Caesars who had persecuted the Christians, and found that they usually had a bad end, while his father, who was favorable toward them, had prospered. So, when he and Licinius met at Milan in 313 A.D., they jointly prepared an edict, usually called the ‘Edict of Milan,’ which gave equal liberty to Christians and pagans. *Had Constantine stopped here, he might have been honored as the originator of religious liberty in the Roman Empire, but he had different aims in view.* The Roman Empire had been ruled at times by two, four, and even six Caesars jointly, and in his ambition to become sole emperor, Constantine, as a shrewd statesman, soon saw that the Christian church had *the vitality to become the strongest factor in the empire.* The other Caesars were persecuting the Christians. If he could win them without losing the good will of the pagans, he would win the game. He therefore set himself to the task of *blending the two religions into one.*”

“As H. G. Heggtveit (Lutheran) says:

Constantine labored at this time untiringly to *unite* the worshippers of the old and the new faith in one religion. All his laws and contrivances were aimed at promoting this *amalgamation of religions.* *He would by all lawful and peaceful means meld together a purified heathenism and a moderated Christianity. . . .* His injunction that *the ‘Day of the Sun’ should be a general rest day* was characteristic of his standpoint . . . *Of all his blending and melting together of Christianity and heathenism none is more easy to see*

through than this making of his Sunday Law. The Christians worshipped their Christ, the heathen their sun-god; according to the opinions of the Emperor, the objects for worship in both religions were essentially the same.”- ‘*Kirkehistorie*’ (*Church History*), pp. 233, 234, Chicago: 1882; *Facts of Faith*, p. 109, Southern Publishing Asso. Nashville, TN

“Dr. A. Christian Bang (Lutheran Bishop, Norway) says (emphasis mine):

“This Sunday law constituted no real favoritism toward Christianity. . . . It is evident from all his statutory provisions that the Emperor during the time 313-323 with full consciousness has sought the realization of his religious aim: the amalgamation of heathenism with Christianity.”- ‘*Kirken og Romerstatem*’ (“*The Church and the Roman State*”), p. 256, *Christiana*: 1879.

That Constantine by his Sunday law intended only to enforce the popular heathen festival is acknowledged by Professor Hutton Webster, Ph.D (University of Nebraska), who says:

“This legislation by Constantine probably bore no relation to Christianity; it appears, on the contrary that the Emperor, in his capacity as Pontifex Maximus, was only adding the day of the sun, the worship of which was then firmly established in the Roman Empire, to other ferial days of the sacred calendar.” – ‘*Rest Days*,’ p. 122, NY: 1916.

A. H. Lewis, D. D., who spent years of study and research on this subject, declares that, ‘the pagan religion of Rome had so many holidays on which partial or complete cessation of business and labor was demanded,’ and that Constantine by his Sunday law was merely one more festival to the rest of the empire.”- “*A Critical History of Sunday legislation from 321 to 1888 A.D.*,” pp. 8, 12, New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1888.”

This is clearly seen when we carefully examine all the circumstances presented by Dr. Lewis:

1. Constantine’s Sunday law edict was given March 7, 321. *The very next day he issued an edict commanding purely heathen superstition.* We quote: ‘The august Emperor Constantine to Maximus: ‘If any part of the palace or public works shall be struck by lightning, let the soothsayers, following old usages, inquire into the meaning of the portent, and let their written words, very carefully collected, be reported to our knowledge.’ – Id, p. 19.
2. The Caesars for over a century had been worshippers of the sun-god, whose weekly holidays was Sunday. Dr. Lewis says: ‘The sun-worship cult had grown steadily in the Roman Empire for a long time.’ – Id, p. 20. He then quotes the following from Schaff in regards to Elagabalus, a Roman Caesar of a century before Constantine’s time: ‘The abandoned youth, El-Gabal or Heliogabalus (218-222), who polluted the throne with the blackest vices and follies, tolerated all religions in the hope of at last merging them in *his favorite Syrian worship of the sun, with its abominable excesses.* He himself was a priest if the god of the sun, and thence took his name.’ –Id, pp. 20, 21.

“Dean Millman says:

‘It was openly asserted that that the worship of the sun, under the name of Elagabalus, was to supersede all other worship. If we may believe the biographies in the Augustan history, a more ambitious scheme of *a universal religion* had dawned upon the mind of the emperor. *The Jewish, the Samaritan, even the Christian, were to be fused and recast into one great system, of which the sun was to be the central object of adoration.*” – “*History of Christianity*,” Vol II, Book 2, chap. 8, par. 22, pp. 17, 179, New York: 1881.

“Dr. Lewis further says: that Aurelian, who reigned from 270-276 A.D. embellished the temple of the Sun with ‘above fifteen thousand pounds of gold.’ - History of Sunday legislation,’ p. 23. **Diocletian**, who reigned from 284 to 305,’ appealed in the face of the army to the all-seeing deity of the sun.’ – Id, p. 24.

“Such were the influences that preceded Constantine and surrounded him when he came to power. The following extract shows still plainer the character of Constantine, and his attitude toward *the sun-worshipping cults*, when the first ‘Sunday Edict’ was issued:

‘But the devotion of Constantine was more peculiarly directed towards the genius of the sun, the **Apollo** of the Greek and Roman mythology. The sun was universally celebrated as the universal, the invincible guide and protector of Constantine.’ – Id, pp. 26, 27.

‘These facts combine to show that Sunday legislation was purely pagan in origin.’ – Ibid, p. 31

‘In his [Constantine’s] law he only sought to give additional honor to the ‘venerable day’ of patron-deity, the sun-god.’ – Id, p. 32.

‘His attitude toward Christianity was that of a shrewd politician rather than a devout adherent.’ – Id, p. 6.

“Dr. Lewis quotes from Dr. Schaff a very fitting conclusion to his remarks concerning Constantine:

‘And down to the end of his life he retained the title and dignity as Pontifex Maximus, or high priest of the *heathen hierarchy*. His coins bore on the one side the letters of the name of Christ, and on the other the figure of the sun-god, and the inscription, ‘Sol Invictus.’” – Id. p. 10.

NOTE: It is therefore no surprise to find out who, today, retains the name and title as Pontifex Maximus---the Pope as the “supreme pontiff”—one who simply inherited and elaborated on the heathen-pagan powers of the Roman Caesars and emperors. The secular authority affirms this. Note:

“Pontifex, a member of the ancient member of the Roman Collegium which served the highest authority in all matters appertaining to religion. It was under the rule of the Pontifex Maximus, who was responsible for the *rex sacrorum*, the *flamens*, and the *vestal virgins*. Originally there were only three pontifices, but by 82 B.C. the number of members has been raised to fifteen. **The name Pontifex Maximus is one of the titles of the pope.**” - Webster’s Unified Dictionary and Encyclopedia, 1960 ed., H. S. Stuttman Co. Inc., NY 16 New York.

As I pointed out in my previous study of the Seven Churches, “Constantine allegedly ‘saw the Cross in a vision.’ From all the portrayals of what this ‘cross’ is and means to and in all mainstream Christian religious literature, artworks, artifacts, relics, sacerdotal garments, etc., it is a literal shape of a cross or ‘T’, as they traditionally say it looked like. Regarding the alleged vision of Constantine, nothing is even mentioned as him seeing *Christ* crucified on that ‘cross’! All the holy men of God from Adam to the last in the New Testament always saw CHRIST of the cross either as the typical lamb in the ceremonial law or the incarnated God in the flesh dying for the sins of the world. In fact, a Christless-cross is a very dangerous and bloody religious symbol, as church history attests. It was employed as the justification and battle cry for religious wars, conquests, and Crusades that were nothing but papal conquests and expansion of its design to

conquer lands, enforce their apostate paganized Christianity and control the consciences of those they conquered. It was literally *their* cross or the sword.

But the true meaning of the cross of Christ is the cross of self-denial and self-sacrifice, not indulgence of the lust of the flesh, the eye, and the love of the world and things of the world, worse, the sacrifice of the lives of the innocent and saints who would rather die than obey the traditions and commandments of men or compromise their consciences. The Creator demonstrated this by condescending to the nature of man four thousand years after the fall in the incarnation, and manifesting the perfect example of meekness, humility, self-denial, self-sacrifice, and “*obedience unto death, even the death of the cross.*”

As I pointed out in my previous Study of the Seven Churches: “Bible gospel truth and church history would have been infinitely better served if Constantine was introduced to us in the history books and theology as being “the Father of Compromise, and the Father of the First Sunday Law,” for indeed he was as their very own history and records attest. But that of course is wishful thinking and counteracts Biblical prophecy. Constantine was a shrewd politician,— perfect prototype of the rapidly-emerging class of political candidates campaigning on a “conservative and social agenda” in America, establishing the shape of things to come. Constantine was never converted to Biblical Christianity but to apostate Christianity for he retained and exercised the privileges of his title ‘Pontifex Maximus’ and Sol Invictus, or the invisible sun god. Pope Sylvester carried with him to his grave the dubious distinction as the pope who co-operated with Constantine in officially bringing in paganism into the Christian church during the Pergamos stage through the masterful alchemy of the amalgamation of merging, fusing, recasting, and “new modeling” the cause of Christ. The result was the prophesied “falling away of the apostolic church” and the emergence of the “man of sin, the son of perdition” in the papacy during the Thyatira stage bringing about the Dark Ages. This apostasy is changed the compromising, persecuting church into “MYSTERY, BABYLON, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS” of the last days. 2 Thess. 2: 1-12; Rev. 17.

“He who has the sharp word with two edges.”

“Like the descriptive titles that introduced the messages to the churches of Ephesus and Smyrna, this phrase is drawn from the description of the *glorified Christ* in ch. 1: 16 (see comment there on ch. 21).” – Notes, E.G. White Comprehensive Commentary on Revelation, Vol. II.

“I know. . . where thou dwellest, even where Satan’s seat is.”

Seat has several meanings, including: “a place of abode, residence, site, location; specifically, a capital or other center of government. A locality in which a specified thing or condition is prevalent, as a *seat* of learning.” – Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, Fifth edition, 1942.

Pergamos or Pergamum became the seat of Satan (the primary antichrist), in the person of the pagan Roman emperors or Caesars who demanded homage and worship, as sun-gods, which alone belongs to the true God. In the transfer of Roman power from the imperial Caesars to popes, the latter likewise claimed to be the “vicar of Christ on earth,” or verily “God himself on earth” –which is the translation of Vicarius Filii Dei. (More discussion on these will be in the Thyatira stage of the church next month).

“Thou holdest fast My name. . . . even in those days wherein Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwells.”

“Antipas is a familiar Greek name, compounded of the Greek words, *anti*, ‘in the place of,’ and *pas*, an abbreviated form of *pater* (cf. on Luke 3: 21; 24; 18. See Josephus’ Antiquities XIV, 1.3 [10]). It reflected the father’s hope that the son so named would eventually take his place in the world. Some commentators hold that a Christian by this name in Pergamum had been recently martyred for his faith, presumably for refusing to worship the emperor. If so, the experience and example of this faithful martyr may be considered typical of that of untold thousands [millions, in fact] who suffered for their faith in later ages. Although it is possible that the name may have a figurative application in the Pergamos period of church history, Inspiration provides no apparent clue with respect to such an application.” - Ibid.

Antipas Martyrdom. -- Apostle Paul himself was part of the first edition as it were, of Antipas. He bravely and calmly said to those who feared for his life, after hearing Agabus’ dire prophecy, “I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.” (Acts 21: 13). Martyr is from the Greek *martus*, meaning, “witness.” “A martyr is one whose death testifies to his faith. The Greek here rendered “faithful martyr” is identical with that used of Jesus Christ in Rev. 1: 5, translated as “the faithful Witness.”

“During Paul’s trial before Nero, the [cruel Roman] emperor had been so strongly impressed with the force of the apostle’s words, that he deferred the decision of the case, neither acquitting nor condemning the accused servant of God. But the emperor’s malice against Paul returned. Exasperated by his inability to check the spread of the Christian religion, even in his imperial household, he determined that as soon as a plausible pretext could be found, the apostle should be put to death. Not long afterward Nero pronounced the decision that condemned Paul to a martyr’s death. Inasmuch as a *Roman citizen could not be subjected to torture*, he was sentenced to be beheaded. Paul was taken in a private manner to the place of execution. Few spectators were allowed to be present; for his persecutors, alarmed at the extent of his influence, feared that converts might be won to Christianity by the scenes of his death. But even the hardened soldiers who attended him, listened his words, and with amazement saw him cheerful and even joyous in the prospect of death. To some who witnessed his martyrdom, his spirit of forgiveness toward his murderers and his unwavering confidence in Christ till the last, proved a savor of life unto life. More than one accepted the Savior whom Paul preached, and ere long fearlessly sealed their faith with their blood.” – E. G. White, *Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 509, 510-512.

LESSON FOR TODAY: How did *Antipas*—Apostle Paul, and the countless faithful martyrs for Jesus whom they represent—hold fast the name of Jesus without denying the faith, while facing torture and martyrdom? Paul’s example and witness speaks for itself, and should be a powerful influence and inspiration to all who will be called to suffer martyrdom for Christ and His righteousness’ sake in the coming days. Note:

“The apostle Paul was looking into the great beyond, not with uncertainty or dread, but with joyous hope and longing expectation. As he stands at the place of martyrdom, he sees not the sword of the executioner or the earth so soon to receive his blood; he looks up to the calm blue heaven of that summer day to the throne of the Eternal Paul had the witness in himself that his soul is precious in the sight of his Redeemer. His life is hid with Christ in God, and he is persuaded that He who has conquered death is able to keep that which is committed to His trust.” – Ibid, p. 512, 513.

(End)