

THE PROPHETIC WORD IN CRISIS DAYS

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by

Various Contributors

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CHAPTER TWELVE

THE PROPHETIC WORD AND ROMANISM

J. DWIGHT PENTECOST

In the book of the Revelation the Lord Jesus Christ is revealed in His glory as a Judge. In chapters 4 through 19 of Revelation, we have presented to us the great catastrophic judgments, which will be poured out by God upon the earth, upon Satan, upon the nation Israel, upon the Gentiles, upon false religious systems during the tribulation period. We want to consider one of these great judgments, the judgment upon a false apostate religious system.

In the first two verses of the Revelation, chapter 17, John is invited to come and behold another judgment, in verses 3 through 6, he sees the judgment itself. That judgment is described in detail from verse 7 through chapter 18. In chapter 17, verses 1 and 2, we read, "**I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great harlot that sitteth upon many waters: With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.**"

It is an invitation to behold the wrath of God poured out upon a great religious system, which professes to be the Bride of Christ, but which God calls a harlot, a system that has usurped power, not only in the religious realm, but in the political realm as well.

There are two symbols presented to us in the first verse.

The first is the symbol of "**the great harlot.**"

When harlotry is referred to in the Word of God, in its spiritual sense, it has reference to religion or a religious system. In the Old Testament, in the prophecy of Hosea, the nation Israel is called an adulteress wife, because as a nation she had gone after false gods, and had been faithless to the God to whom she had been joined. When John refers to this system in these words, he is referring to a religious system, which professes to be a Bride of Christ, but which Christ repudiates as having any relationship to Him at all.

The second symbol is the symbol of the "**many waters.**"

The “**many waters**” are described to us in Revelation 17:15. “**The waters which thou sawest, where the harlot sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.**” This is a reference to political power. We find, then, the harlot is a politico-religious system that has come to great power exercising authority over a very wide realm.

In the second verse it is told John that many kings and many inhabitants of the earth had so united themselves with this harlot and have come under the influence and power of this politico-religious system. They are as intoxicated men, that is, they are being moved along by a power outside of themselves.

In verses 3 and following, John is given a glimpse of the judgment that comes. He is carried in the Spirit into the wilderness and he saw a woman, the same woman that is called the great harlot in verse 1. She is seen to be sitting upon a scarlet colored beast, and the beast is full of names of blasphemy, and has seven heads and ten horns.

If you were to turn back to Revelation 13, you would find this beast first presented. This beast rises up out of the sea, that is, from among the Gentile nations, and it has seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns, ten crowns, and upon his head the name of blasphemy.

The beast, as described in John 13, and referred to again in chapter 17, is the head of a great federation of European states. The prophet Daniel foretold that the final Gentile world power, which would have authority over Palestine, was the Roman Empire and the final form of the Roman Empire would be a federation of states. This is foretold in Daniel 2, as Daniel describes the ten toes of the great image and again in Daniel 7, as Daniel describes the ten horns on the fourth beast. As John expands the teaching of the prophet Daniel he tells us that there will arise out of the final form of the Roman Empire a federation of states that will be united together under one head. That head is the Beast of Revelation chapter 13 and chapter 17.

As we look in chapter 17, verse 3, we observe that as powerful as is this beast who will have authority over the federated states of Europe, and perhaps even include the United States within his confederacy, this beast is not moving according to his own will, but rather he is being controlled by the one who sits upon him. One mounts a beast for just one purpose, that is, to take the reins and guide and control that beast in its movement.

So we find that this politico-religious system, called here the great harlot, has come into the saddle, if we may use a good Texas expression, and having mounted the saddle has taken the reins and is directing and controlling the movement of this beast.

The splendor of the woman is described in the 4th verse, for she is arrayed in purple and scarlet color. These colors were the color of royalty and the color of the priest's vestments in the Old Testament. She is claiming authority in both the kingly and priestly realms.

She is further decked with gold and precious stones and pearls. She is noted for the lavishness of her ornaments, and the great wealth that she possesses. And in her hand is a golden cup, full of abominations, and the filthiness of her fornication.

As John is presenting this woman, it is not of as great a significance to him that she is in the saddle controlling the federated states of Europe, nor that she is ornamented as a king or as a priest, nor even that she is bedecked with material riches, but the most significant thing is the cup that is in her hand from which the nations and the kings of the earth have been made drunk; a cup that John classifies as full of abomination and the filthiness of her fornication. From the cup in her hand she is presenting to the world what God called an abomination, — a cup that instead of giving life produces death, — a cup that instead of offering truth presents a lie to men.

The cup represents the damning doctrines and practices of this politico-religious system. The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy in I Timothy 4, “**that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits.**”

Here is one who comes to seduce mankind that they might drink of the abomination of the cup of her hand that they might be made drunken by that which she presents. In II Timothy 4, the Apostle said that, “**The time will come when they will heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.**”

Instead of listening to the truth of the Word of God, men will accept fables out of the abominable cup in the hand of this one, who claims to be the bride of Christ, but whom God calls an harlot.

In the name that is written upon the forehead of this one, we have a clue to the identification of that system about which John is speaking. He refers to her as “**Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots, the Abominations of the Earth.**”

In the book of Genesis, the book of beginnings, after the fall of man God instituted a way of access into His presence, a way by which sinners might come to God. In Genesis 3:21 we read, “**Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them.**” God instituted the principle of sacrifice, that sinners might be covered by blood, and that the sinner might be clothed with the skin of the sacrificial victim.

In Chapter 4 of Genesis we see how this established principle worked itself out.

Cain brought of the fruit of the ground as a sacrifice but Abel brought a sheep as a sacrifice in obedience to that which God had revealed. When you turn over to the 9th chapter of the book of Genesis, you find God instituted the principle of human government. Human government was that instrument by which God would maintain law and order, the instrument by which God would administer justice and right and preserve peace and harmony in a world of sinful men.

These two institutions were of divine origin. We may term the first “religion” and the second “human government.” God instituted these two principles in order that men might come to God through that way which He had established, and that men might be governed by God through the instrumentality of human government. There two were separate spheres and were not to be administered by the same individual or by the same power, until Shiloh, that is Messiah, would come, who would as Melchisedec did, unite the principle of priest and king in one person.

In the Old Testament, as God dealt with the nation Israel, He made it very clear that the two spheres were to be administered by different individuals.

The King must come of the tribe of Judah but the priest could come only of the tribe of Levi. Thus in Israel no man could be both king and priest because the two must come from two different tribes. In the New Testament, the Lord confirmed the same truth of what we refer to today as “the separation of church and state,” for when tested by His adversaries He said: **“Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.”**

He recognized two divinely instituted principles, both of which were to serve within their own spheres, but which could not be united together.

When we go into the 10th and 11th chapters of Genesis, we find that civilization began to move away from both the revelation which God made concerning access into His presence, and away from being governed by God or God's representatives.

In Genesis chapter 10, we find the line of Noah. To Noah was born Ham (verse 6), and of Ham was born Cush (verse 6), and of Cush came Nimrod (verse 8). You have here the progression of apostasy after the flood. God gave a revelation to Noah. Ham rejected that revelation and became *“the darkened one.”* Cush further repudiated the revelation and became *“the blackened one,”* and Nimrod became the arch-apostate of the post-diluvian world.

We read in verse 10 that the beginning of Nimrod's kingdom was Babel which means *“the gate of God.”*

In chapter 11 you find Nimrod moved away from the place of divine revelation and the place where God's government was administered through His appointed representatives. Nimrod founded a civilization which repudiated the revelation made by God to man and also instituted a new government where they ruled themselves and were not ruled by God. They attempted to unite the two spheres under one head. It was at that time they said,

“Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. And the Lord God came down to see the city and the tower” (Genesis 11:3).

The city was the seat of government, and the tower was the center of a new religious system. This was the first false idolatrous, religious system which had ever been instituted upon the face of the earth. Before the flood there had been believers and unbelievers, but there had never been a false religious system instituted by men. But there in that city which they called **“Bab-el”** the new *“gate of God,”* there is a new government and a new religion. It was at that point, (verse 9) that God scattered them and the name of it was changed to **“Babel,”** which means *“confusion.”* That which the people of Babylon said was the gate of God, the entrance into the presence of God, God said is a confusing system, and God scattered it.

A study of this religious system, which was instituted in Babylon, will help us identify that system of which John speaks, when he refers to the harlot as "**Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and Abominations.**"

When Nimrod departed from the place of revelation and came into that land known later as Babylon, he married and he married a girl by the name of Semiramis. Semiramis conceived and bore a son who was named Tammuz. Going back to the promise of Genesis 3:15, where God said, "**I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel,**" Semiramis claimed that she was the woman of the promise and that her son, Tammuz, was the seed of the woman. While this civilization repudiated God, they could not eliminate the knowledge that had been given to them through revelation.

Semiramis set herself up as the high-priestess of the Babylonian religion. It was a religion that centered in the worship of the mother and the child. The sign of the Babylonian religion was a mother who held a baby in her arms and was known as the mother-child cult. Semiramis took for herself the name, "**The Queen of Heaven,**" and taught that access into the presence of God was through her high-priestess ministry. She became, therefore, a mediatrix or redemptrix between God and man. This was a new way of approach, not through blood sacrifice, but through the priestly ministry of the mother of the child.

When Tammuz came to young manhood, according to Babylonian legend, he was slain while hunting a wild boar. Semiramis gathered together a number of the virgins who had been set aside to this religion and after a forty day period of prayer and fasting, Semiramis said that Tammuz had been resurrected from the dead by the power of his mother, "**The Queen of Heaven.**"

Therefore that forty day period became an annual time of mourning and sacrifice throughout Babylon. At the conclusion of that forty day fast, a feast was observed in honor of Semiramis and Tammuz. They made the egg the sacred symbol of Tammuz. It was a symbol of life out of death and was exchanged on that feast day set apart after the forty day fast. In mid-winter on the celebration of the birthday of Tammuz, they erected evergreen trees as the symbol of the eternal life of Tammuz.

This mystery religion which centered in the worship of Semiramis and Tammuz, the mother and child, was spread beyond Babylon over to Phoenicia. In Phoenicia the names were changed to Ashtaroth and Tammuz, but the same religion was carried on. The name Ashtaroth was changed to Ishtar, from which we get Easter.

From Phoenicia the religion was carried abroad by that seafaring people into Egypt, where the name of the mother and child was changed to Isis and Horus. It was carried over to Greece, where the names were changed to Aphrodite and Eros, and over to Rome where the name of the mother and child became Venus and Cupid. In each place it was the same religion that had been instituted in Babylon, a salvation through the mother of the mother-child cult, "**The Queen of Heaven,**" the redemptrix between God and men. Out of this system grew up the observance of Lent, Christmas with its Christmas tree, and of Easter and the Easter egg.

It was this religion that became the great religion that corrupted the nation Israel and brought about the Babylonian captivity of Judah.

In I Kings 16, Ahab married a girl by the name of Jezebel. Jezebel was a Phoenician. Jezebel brought this mother-child worship along with her into the nation Israel. It is recorded of Ahab that he “**made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him**” (verse 33). Why? Because he permitted this mother-child worship to be introduced into Israel, and the nation Israel and the nation of Judah, both went after this mother-child worship.

When you turn to the Prophet Jeremiah, you find Jeremiah speaking to the children of Judah telling them that they are going to be carried into captivity, because they have gone after these false gods. In Jeremiah 44:17, Judah says, “**We will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of heaven, to pour out drink offering unto her**”; verse 18, “**we left off burning incense to the queen of heaven**”; verse 19, “**we burned incense to the queen of heaven.**” All through this chapter you will find Judah professing their love for and obedience to the Queen of Heaven, who has become the object of worship.

If you think that that is a sad state, will you turn to the eighth chapter of Ezekiel, where Ezekiel, speaking to the same people concerning the coming Babylonian captivity, tells why God is so displeased with the nation.

The Prophet Ezekiel is told to make his way into the temple and into the holy of holies to see what is going on. As the prophet goes to the door of the court, verse 7, he beheld a hole in the wall, and God told him to dig in the wall. When he had digged in the wall, he beheld a door and when he went in through that door, he beheld the wicked abominations being practiced there. He looked into the holy place within the temple that was set apart to be the place where God manifested His glory. Instead of the glory of God, he beheld every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, portrayed upon the wall round about (verse 10). He saw the elders of Israel (verse 11) with a thick cloud of incense.

The prophet was brought to the door of the gate of the Lord's house which was toward the north; and there sat women weeping for Tammuz (verse 14). What are they doing? They are observing Lent prior to the feast of Ishtar! They are worshipping the mother-child image.

In verse 5 of this same chapter, the prophet is told to look toward the north from the front of the temple. He is directed to look to where the altar of sacrifice was erected. Alongside the altar of sacrifice something has been erected. He lifted up his eyes toward the north and he beheld “**this image of jealousy in the entry.**”

The altar had not been removed but alongside of the altar has been put an image. What is it? Verse 14 tells us. It is the image of the mother and the child. Israel is gathering there in the courtyard to give their adoration to “**The Queen of Heaven**” who had been presented as the redemptrix between God and man.

The blasphemy of it! God's altar said to the people of Israel that there was one way of access. The children of Israel said they would come to God through the mother-child, through "**the Queen of Heaven.**" They did not observe the holy days of Israel, but observed the holy days of the Babylonian religion. It was because Jerusalem became the center of the worship of the Babylonian mother-child religion that God indicated through the prophet Ezekiel that He would send them to Babylon in chastisement.

Babylon continued as the center of this great world-wide false religious system until her destruction. At that time the center of the system moved into Pergamos in Asia Minor. It is for this reason that John writes to the church in Pergamos and says, "**I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat** (or throne) **is**" (Revelation 2:13). The religion is called Satan's religion, not God's!

Eventually the headquarters of the system moved from Pergamos to Rome, where it became a dominating factor in the life of the Roman Empire. At the time the Caesars came into power in the Roman Empire, in order to enhance their authority at the time of their coronation, they took to themselves not only the title of "Emperor," but in addition the title "*Pontifex Maximus*" or "*the highest priest.*" The Caesars became not only heads of state, but heads of the mother-child cult in Rome as well. They sought to unite under their authority that which God said would never be united in one man other than in the person of Jesus Christ, the authority in the political and religious realm. Down to the time of Constantine in the year 300, all of the Roman emperors became both Emperor and Pontifex Maximus.

When Constantine came to authority, he soon was engaged in civil war with Maxentius as to which one would be Emperor in Rome. He desired to enlist the support of all Christians, for in 300 years Christianity had become a very powerful force in the Roman Empire. Constantine claimed to have had a vision in which he saw a flag unfurled, across which were written the words "*In soc signo vinces;*" "*in this sign conquer.*" He said that that was a sign to him that Christianity was the true faith.

Constantine made an edict that should he become victorious over Maxentius, Christianity would become the official religion of Rome, replacing the mother-child worship. Constantine in 312 and 313 A.D. defeated Maxentius and, according to his promise, made an edict that Christianity was now the official religion of the Roman Empire. All of those who were conquered by Constantine were baptized into the Christian church.

The priests in Rome carried on the same rituals, the same ceremonies, the same adoration and veneration and worship of "**the Queen of Heaven,**" the same feasts and holy days, but it now has been officially declared by the emperor and the Pontifex Maximus as Christian. And because of that edict all of pagan Romanism or Babylonianism was superimposed upon and amalgamated with the Christian church. Christianity was corrupted by this paganism of Rome and that system of paganism has continued to the present day within the professing church to the point that we find a great religious body that calls itself Christian.

As a result, they falsely recognize the mother of our Lord as the redemptrix and mediatrix between God and man, which feels that through the observance of Lent and of Easter and Christmas and all of these Babylonian traditions that they will please God.

Further they believe that the head of their church is not only a religious leader but a political leader as well, having all religious and political power as Peter's successor and Christ's vicar on earth.

Some 200 years after Constantine's edict Augustine, the great theologian of the sixth century, wrote his work, "*Civitate Dei*," or "*the City of God*." He set aside that which for centuries had been the belief of the church that Jesus Christ would come to this earth personally to establish a millennial kingdom and to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords.

The belief of the church from the time of the New Testament apostles to the time of Augustine had been what we would call premillennial, but Augustine held that the church is the only kingdom that there will be on this earth and that the head of the church is not only a religious head but is a political ruler as well. And it was through the teaching of Augustine that the Christian church turned from their belief that Jesus Christ would come to the earth to reign personally, to the view that there sits on Peter's chair in Rome one man, the vicar of Christ, who has all authority in both the religious and the political realm. From the time of Augustine to the present day, you will find that this church that calls itself Christian, the Bride of Christ, the true body of Christ, the only church of Christ, claims that in its leader you have the political ruler and the religious ruler as well.

John, in the second chapter of the Revelation, told us that after the rapture of the Church, the professing church, which would be left, would be delivered over into great tribulation. John says in Revelation 2:20, "**I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things offered to idols.**"

Under the term "**Jezebel**," John is referring to the system that Jezebel introduced that will be perpetuated right on down through John's time till the time of the end.

Notice the parallelism here with what we read in chapter 17. John continues, "**I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.**"

John is telling us that when the true Church is translated out of this earth, this religious system, this politico-religious system, is going to reach out and bring vast areas, great nations of this world under her power and authority and that the kings of the earth are going to receive their power and their authority by her permission. I believe that we are face to face in our country today with a very dangerous movement. It is referred to as the ecumenical movement. It is that movement which seeks to unite all professing churches that claim to be churches of Christ under one head.

A bishop from California State, together with the executive head of one of our major denominations, recently made public proposals that there should be a federation of four denominations under one head.

In a televised news interview some weeks later, this executive of this major denomination confessed that it was his goal, as a leader in the ecumenical movement, ultimately to unite all Protestantism and Romanism under one head and in one world religion. That which was expressed as the aim of the ecumenical movement will be realized according to the prophetic Word. That which will claim to be the Bride of Christ, God says, is an harlot, because it is not united to Him in truth and by faith.

According to Revelation 2:22; it is to be cast into the great judgment of the tribulation.

In Revelation chapter 17, we find that this woman, this great religious system, that calls itself a bride of Christ, but which God says is the final form of Babylonian harlotry, the abomination of the earth, becomes the persecutor of the saints. Verse 6 says, “**... I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great wonder**” (or great amazement).

John is amazed that one could persecute those who name the name of Christ and still claim to be Christ's bride.

We have seen that the federated states of Europe will come into federation and power through the manipulations of this woman who sits on the beast. According to Ezekiel 38 and 39, the power of the king of the north is a great threat to the peace and the unity and harmony of Europe.

The woman represents herself as the hope for world peace. And the woman presents herself as the savior and the deliverer of the world from communism. And the nations of the earth listened to the suggestion of this woman, this religious system, and the nations of the earth, accepting her as a bulwark against communism, submit to her power and authority and in turn find that they are controlled by her. And that very movement is discernible in the world today.

In verse 16 John reveals something of divine judgment on this great politico-religious system.

The ten horns, that is, the ten kings of verse 12 hate the harlot “**and shall make her desolate and naked and eat her flesh and burn her with fire.**” This politico-religious system becomes so authoritarian, sits with such a tight rein in the saddle that no freedom of movement is given to the kings or their kingdoms. And as a result, they agree together to destroy not only the system, but the city that is the seat of this system. And in chapter 18, John describes for us in detail the destruction of the city of Rome, and the suppression, the elimination, the destruction of the politico-religious system that for centuries had been seeking to capture and control the world from the city of Rome.

That system that began in Babylon will ultimately be destroyed in the middle of the tribulation by the federated states of Europe.

The professing church will more and more be brought under the influence and control of the system that John calls an “**abomination**.”

The time will come when true believers are lifted out of this world by rapture and the influence and control of this system will be complete. This system will continue during the early years of the tribulation period to be wiped out as the beast overthrows the politico-religious system that has brought him to power.

May the Lord Jesus Christ bring us through this study to an understanding of the system that calls itself the Bride of Christ, but which God calls an harlot, and to a love for those who are enmeshed in the system, who, like Israel of old, are trying to by-pass the true altar and come to God through “**the Queen of Heaven**,” who are trusting in a final form of Babylonianism in which there is no life.

May the Gospel of redeeming grace liberate multitudes from the embrace of the great harlot.

~ end of chapter 12 ~

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