

## CHAPTER 9

### Vision #7-Zechariah 5:5-11

#### The Woman in the Basket

<sup>5</sup> Then the angel who talked with me came out and said to me, "Lift your eyes now, and see what this is that goes forth." <sup>6</sup>So I asked, "What is it?" And he said, "It is a basket that is going forth." He also said, "This is their resemblance throughout the earth: <sup>7</sup>Here is a lead disc lifted up, and this is a woman sitting inside the basket"; <sup>8</sup>then he said, "This is Wickedness!" And he thrust her down into the basket, and threw the lead cover over its mouth. <sup>9</sup>Then I raised my eyes and looked, and there were two women, coming with the wind in their wings; for they had wings like the wings of a stork, and they lifted up the basket between earth and heaven. <sup>10</sup>So I said to the angel who talked with me, "Where are they carrying the basket?" <sup>11</sup>And he said to me, "To build a house for it in the land of Shinar; when it is ready, the basket will be set there on its base."

#### **“THIS IS A WOMAN – THIS IS WICKEDNESS”**

This vision of Zechariah is the culmination of a long journey, which, we shall see, began in Eden’s garden, and concludes in fiery judgment upon Mystery Babylon. To grasp its meaning we must see Zechariah’s Gentile context. Some of this section will be purposefully written in a cryptic style, peppered with sarcastic humor, to belittle the person and efforts of this seductress and counterfeit.

Israel (i.e., Judah & Benjamin) had returned from their Babylonian Captivity (a 70-year captivity). Ezekiel was written as Judah was going into captivity; Daniel, while the Jews were in captivity; and, Zechariah as the Jews were (if you would) returning from the captivity.

Their experiences within the Gentile World, within these three books, captivate the “prophetic essence” of contact with the “Kingdoms of this World.” Likewise, do the books of Jeremiah and Isaiah (going into captivity). But these three are pivotal to the understanding of prophecy concerning the judgment of the latter day kingdom that shall epitomize the culmination of all Gentile World Civilization—Political, Military, Economic, Cultural and Religious. Did they not see that the Gentile World Kingdoms, and their commercial wealth, would infect and do infect the people of God? Surely, they did.

WICKEDNESS—that woman of iniquity, that symbol of all that bespeaks idolatry and falsehood, harlotries and sorcery—would one day be removed from Israel, from throughout the world. She would be consolidated, concentrated into the commercial basket, the ephah. Judgment (i.e., the “curse”) would one day pervade the planet—and all those awaiting divine retribution for their iniquitous thievery and idolatrous falsehoods—will come to ultimate naught. Even so, is not this that Woman so clearly defined in Revelation 17-18 whose measuring cup is *“full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication?”*

*“Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication . . . so he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH”* (Revelation 17:1b-5).

Judgment is to be meted out upon this great harlot—whom, as we shall see, can be none other than the SAME “Woman of Wickedness” seen by Zechariah. We will delve into her full identity; but first, take note, for judgment to be administered upon this “Woman of Wickedness” she must have the testimony of two witnesses, two women, aligned against her, and who will transport her to her final destination and placement of judgment.

Zechariah again is encouraged to *“Lift your eyes now, and see what this is that goes forth”* and again, what he sees is a basket that is *“going forth . . . throughout the earth”* (Zechariah 5:5-6). Once again, the implications are upon the whole earth—throughout the earth. Here is another “cosmic encounter” preparing us for the End of Days.

*“So I asked, ‘What is it?’ And he said, ‘It is a basket (i.e., “ephah”) that is going forth.’ He also said, ‘this is their resemblance throughout the earth: ‘Here is a lead disc lifted up, and this is a woman sitting inside the basket’ then he said, ‘this is Wickedness!’ And he thrust her down into the basket, and threw the lead cover over its mouth”* (Zechariah 5:6-8).



This is an altogether familiar basket to the Israelites—for it is the “commercial” standard of measurement, the *ephah*. But it has a leaded disc cover atop it—the cover of “judgment” – for “lead” in the Bible clearly stands for judgment. Furthermore, within its contents there is a most familiar female figure to us: WICKEDNESS or, if you would, the “Woman of Wickedness.”

Yes, and think not that this woman has more than an abominable resemblance to her counterpart in Revelation 17—The Mother of Harlots: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH (Revelation 17:5).

I would unreservedly declare: The Woman of Wickedness and the Mother of Harlots are IDENTICAL! Her apostasies have abounded throughout Israel and the Church. She is the “Queen of Heaven” spoken of in Jeremiah—that Ashtaroth or Astarte of the Canaanite deity. Yes, “*This is Wickedness!*” (Zechariah 5:8a).

The “composition” and/or testimony (if you would) of this Woman of Wickedness—this Mother of Harlots is TWO-FOLD—for she is that Great City:

*“And the woman whom you saw is that GREAT CITY (my caps) which reigns over the kings of the earth”* (Revelation 17:18).

Expositors have deliberated for centuries over the identity of Mystery Babylon. Some have adamantly concluded that she is the Roman Church and the

Protestant denominations are her daughters. That she is the work of the Evil One, no one can doubt. But, as you look upon her in Revelation 17 and 18, you begin to see that she is but one, as the Woman, the Lamb's Wife is but one, but both are "expressed" as a TESTIMONY to their workmanship—to their creation. One the "old creation" – the other, the "new creation."

Now, look more closely . . . ***"Mystery Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and of the Abominations of the Earth . . . I (John) saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus"*** (Revelation 17:5-6).

Again: ***"The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits . . . the waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues. And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot (NOTE: The Original Greek does NOT afford an exegesis wherein these ten horns "witness" her demise—they fully participate and orchestrate her destruction.), make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire . . . and the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth . . . Babylon the great is fallen . . . for all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury . . . come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. Render to her just as she rendered to you, and repay her double according to her works; in the cup which she has mixed, mix double for her. In the measure that she glorified herself and lived luxuriously, in the same measure give her torment and sorrow; for she says in her heart, I sit as queen, and am no widow, and will not see sorrow . . . and cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, 'What is like this great city?' . . . for your merchants were the great men of the earth, for by your sorcery all the nations were deceived . . . for true and righteous are His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants shed by her. Again they said, 'Alleluia! Her smoke rises up forever and ever!'"*** (Revelation 17-19 in sequence).



Clearly, these verses in Revelation chapters 17, 18 and 19 speak of but one woman, one Mother of Harlots, one woman who is devoured by the Beast with Ten Horns, upon whom she rides; one woman from whom all the kings of the earth have drunk of the wine of her fornication; one woman who has prostituted herself as the QUEEN and who has made all the great merchants of the earth rich through her trade. Is there any wonder that the first mentioning of HALLELUJAHS in the entire New Testament (i.e., “Praise Jehovah”) ascends before the Throne after the judgment of Mystery Babylon, the Mother of Harlots?

There is no question—she is both that Apostate Church, who is bereft of true love and devotion to Christ. She knows not love—for she is the very Mother of Harlots. The most overwhelming characteristic of her harlotry is the price she is willing to sell her “favors” to the great merchants of the earth—while *“in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth”* (Revelation 18:24).

Yes, she is the Apostate Church who rides upon the political Beast and his Ten-horned Kingdom—but she has so closely identified herself through her prostitutions, that she is Commercial Babylon. Religious AND Commercial

Babylon—that Great City—is void of any real love or commitment to a husband. Thus, the *“blood of the martyrs of Jesus”* (Revelation 17:6) and *“the blood of His servants shed by her”* (Revelation 19:2) characterize the masterpiece of the Beast and the False Prophet. That Great City, the Mother of Harlots hates anything and everything that bespeaks of commitment to our Lord, the Lamb of God.

And, just what is the “nature” of her apostasy? We don’t have to look too far—for in Jezebel, a name that connotes her lust for wealth and power, but also depicts that same Woman of Wickedness as she corrupts the people of God, through a mixture of religion, politics and commercialism. Let us see . . .

### **THE BEGUILING NATURE OF HER APOSTASY**

Is it not of historic import that Israel’s apostasies altogether centered in mingling the religion of the patriarchs with the provisions of Baal and Ashtaroth? He Who alone deigned to sustain the tribes of Israel in the Land of Canaan (i.e., Land of “Merchants”—for “Canaan” means thus) was forsaken upon the “Altars of Commercial Expediency.” Witness the travesty of Israel’s idolatrous defense—they are fully condemned and are held culpable for their captivity in Egypt:

*“As for the word that you (i.e., Jeremiah) have spoken to us in the name of the Lord, we will not listen to you! But we will certainly do whatever has gone out of our own mouth, to burn incense to the queen of heaven (i.e., Ashtaroth or “Astarte” by the Phoenicians) and pour out drink offerings to her, as we have done, we and our fathers, our kings, and our princes, in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. For then we had plenty of food (i.e., lit. “Bread”), were well off, and saw no trouble.*

*“But since we stopped burning incense to the queen of heaven and pouring out drink offerings to her, we have lacked everything and have been consumed by the sword and by famine. The women also said, ‘And when we burned incense to the queen of heaven and poured out drink offerings to her, did we make cakes for her, to worship her, and pour out drink offerings to her without our husbands’ permission?’” (Jeremiah 44:16-19).*

Apostasy—the spiritually charming subjugation of God’s people. The Canaanite curse (for *“cursed be Canaan”* son of Ham) stalked the Israelites. Perhaps it is here we should investigate in some depth the ancient apostasies of Israel to understand why today’s condition and the prophesied “great falling away from the faith” (the infamous *“apostasia”*) is so abhorrent in the nostrils of the Lord—as in ancient Israel, so in today’s Church, the parallels find “nothing new

under the sun.” I will expand upon two accounts to expose the Mother of Harlots: Elijah, Obadiah, Ahab and Jezebel and the story of the “Shrine of Micah.”

## **THE NATURE OF ISRAEL'S APOSTASY-Elijah vs. Jezebel**

Many believers have the misconception that when Israel “fell into apostasy” (i.e. idolatry) that there was a complete forsaking of the worship of Elohim (God). Quite to the contrary, the veneration of the God of Israel was fully mixed in with the worship of both Baal and Ashtaroah (*Heb.*) (*Grk.*, Astarte; Chaldean, Ishtar; or Asherah, also of the Canaanites). It was this mixture that was “apostate” in the eyes of the Lord.

In King Ahab’s case he had married Jezebel in the classical “National Alliance” fashion. Solomon had blazed the trail on this type of nuptial bliss—having refined the art of political alliances through marriage to the max (hundreds of countless such affairs). No doubt Ahab was quite active here apart from his union with Jezebel, for he had some 70 sons (surely, Jezebel did not bear them all)!

Ethbaal, now (after slaying the King of the Sidonians) has become the new Canaanite/Phoenician King of Tyre and Sidon. We can tell from antiquity that these Priest-Kings of the Phoenicians were altogether the order of the day—it’s just that murder was a bit rash in securing this title. But the people of Tyre and Sidon knew full well that the “commercial alliance” through marriage that Ahab sought, was well within their grasp, and cemented the extension of their trading empire.

They were experts at establishing oligarchs (native ones) throughout their international trading empire (much akin to how the USA establishes its own native oligarchs; their local ruling elites who traffic in the bodies and souls of men wherever they establish their commercial hegemony—unlike the colonial powers of old (the UK, the Dutch, French, etc.) who established “racial oligarchs” and/or administrators). (For more information on how ancient Tyre controlled its international trading empire, please read “*The Phoenicians and the West-Politics, Colonies, and Trade*” 2d Edition, by the Spanish authoress, Maria Eugenia Aubet, Cambridge University Press).<sup>1</sup>

In essence, the ten tribes of Israel, which had broken away from the two tribes of the south (Judah and Benjamin), had become commercial vassals of both Tyre’s trading empire and “religious culture.” (Much more of this in my tome: THE KING OF TYRE—now in writing; introduction only now available on the web at [www.thetribnet.org](http://www.thetribnet.org)). King Ahab’s Queen Jezebel, naturally (along with

her father Ethbaal), wanted (and Ahab no doubt did as well) a multitude of Baal and Astarte “prophets and prophetesses.”

Thus, some 450 males of Baal and some 400 females of Astarte (i.e., *Ashtaroth* in Hebrew) were available to participate in the sensuous religious ceremonies conducted in the newly built Temple of Baal on the plains of Jezreel. Jezebel is called a harlot for good reasons.

Note these verses exposing Jezebel for the harlot she was:

*“Now it happened, when Joram (one of Jezebel’s sons) saw Jehu, that he said, ‘Is it peace, Jehu?’ So he answered, ‘What peace, as long as the harlotries of your mother Jezebel and her witchcraft are so many?’ . . . Now when Jehu had come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it; and she put paint on her eyes and adorned her head (the classic allure of the harlot), and looked through a window (eventually, Jehu slays her) . . .”* (II Kings 9:22, 30-32a).

Pray tell, what went on in this Temple of Baal that Ahab had built to suffice the harlotries of Jezebel? The infamous practice of SACRED PROSTITUTION wherein all the “merchants of the earth” could fornicate with her—with the prophets of Baal and Astarte, carried the day. My friend, the many merchants who trafficked through Israel were more than obliged; yea, predisposed, to pay such visits at Baal’s Temple—both as an expression of their own devotion to this system of trade, as well as to satiate their own fleshly passions (NOTE: All under the “spiritual covering” of communion with the gods of Baal and Ashtaroth). Alas! Did these fertility gods seduce Israel; but remember, it was the “harlotries of Jezebel” that directed this apostasy; she no doubt was handsomely remunerated.

If you think there is but one harlot in Revelation 17 and 18, you are wrong. There are “harlots” (plural). The “Woman who Rides the Beast” (that great apostate end times’ Church) is certainly one; but, who is this in Revelation 18:9: *“And the kings of the earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her will weep and lament for her . . . for your merchants were the great men of the earth, for by your sorcery (Note: Jezebel was “into” witchcraft) all the nations were deceived”* (Revelation 18:9, 23)? Both commercial fornication and witchcraft (sorcery) are clearly pronounced here. The Harlot of Tyre, The Witch of Sidon, who is the daughter of the King of Tyre, is altogether too apparent!

**OBADIAH—THE ONE WHO “GREATLY FEARED THE LORD”**

One would surmise that any “true religion” - any worship of the One True God—which could be so compromised—would surely be lost in the orgies of Baal and Ashtaroth “worship.” Indeed, most of the Lord’s prophets had been slain by Jezebel (I Kings 18:4); but, enter the God-fearing Obadiah.

Elijah had initially “*shut up the heavens that it rained not*” - but, now, the Lord’s word through Elijah would be: “*I will send rain on the earth*” (I Kings 18:1).

*“And Ahab had called Obadiah, who was in charge of his house. (Now Obadiah feared the Lord greatly. For so it was, while Jezebel massacred the prophets of the Lord, that Obadiah had taken one hundred prophets and hidden them, fifty to a cave, and had fed them with bread and water.)”* (I Kings 18:3-4).

There you have it. Obadiah was the confidant of King Ahab (sort of Ahab’s “spiritual link” to reality, just in case . . . and, of course, in charge of reading Bible stories to Ahab’s brood of 70!). Somehow Obadiah had managed to escape the wrath of Jezebel (no doubt due to his spiritual abilities to survive the deadliest of apostasies—while at the same time ensconcing 100 prophets of the Lord in specially designed caves (affectionately known by me as the **CAVES OF OBADIAH**). Yes, Obadiah was something unusual in the annals of the One True God. No matter what the severity of the apostasy, God had his man right in the midst of the camp!

Preserving a “testimony unto the Lord” was Obadiah’s passion—and, again, somehow he pulled it off. Now, the riches of the “Good Land” (arch type of the “riches of Christ” spoken of in the book of Hebrews), would have to suffice in the form of bread and water for the prophets of the Lord—now, bumping into each other and developing “caveites” in the process (I understand that you lose your eyesight if you bump around in the dark long enough—there goes the vision.). “We’re safe, we’re hungry, we’re thirsty, we’re blind, we’re testifying to each other, and we’re still alive” (that’s the best part). Also, we’re being enabled and empowered to abide in the caves by the one who greatly fears the Lord, our beloved Obadiah—man of many talents, especially survival. Praise the Lord we found Obadiah who’s got the King’s ear . . . O-ba-di-ah’s he’s our man, if he can’t do it, no one can!”

### **WHEN IT RAINS IT POURS or OBADIAH’S OUTTED BY ELIJAH**

In I Kings 18:1-19 we eventually get caught up in the prophetic showdown of Elijah versus the Prophets of Baal—the score: Elijah: 850 - the Prophets of Baal: 0. But the Elijah fireworks are peripheral, compared to the

account of Obadiah, Elijah and Ahab. First, with the rains falling afresh, Ahab and Obadiah cut a deal where one goes one way up the Jezreel Valley and the other goes the other way looking for fresh grass, water, etc., (attempting to sustain their herds).

Obadiah encounters Elijah storming up the Valley: ***“It is I. Go, tell your master, ‘Elijah is here.’”*** (I Kings 18:8). Then begins this little dialogue between Elijah and Obadiah wherein Obadiah pulls every spiritual trick in the book to get out of announcing Elijah’s request to see Ahab. Here are some of Obadiah’s coping mechanisms in I Kings 18:

***“Now as Obadiah was on his way, suddenly Elijah met him; and he recognized him, and fell on his face.”*** (This is called: “Good grief, I can’t believe you’re back!”)

***“Is that you, my lord Elijah?”*** (This is called: “Maybe I’m having a bad dream and when I wake up this whole thing will be a grand delusion!”)

Then Elijah speaks: ***“It is I. Go, tell your master, ‘Elijah is here.’”***

Now comes Obadiah’s enthusiastic response: ***“How have I sinned, that you are delivering your servant into the hand of Ahab, to kill me?”*** (This is called: “Elijah, how’s about using a more indirect approach; you know, ‘negative confessions’ like you’re proposing never work—I mean, can’t you see that one can attract more with honey than the bitter taste of your proposal?”)

Furthermore, Obadiah explains just how bad it is and can get. “If Elijah values his life, he’ll do as I (Obadiah) and live life to the fullest—somewhere else but here!”

***“As the Lord your God lives, there is no nation or kingdom where my master has not sent someone to hunt for you; and when they said, ‘He is not here,’ he took an oath from the kingdom or nation that they could not find you. And now you say, ‘Go, tell your master, ‘Elijah is here.’”*** (“Elijah, them search and destroy missions have turned up nothing—everyone’s taking oaths that they’ve not seen hide nor hair of you. Then, all of a sudden, presto-facto, I show up with you for introductions, like you’re spokesperson or something. You’ve got to be kidding me. How do you spell “stupid” – “D E A T H!””)

Obadiah waxes spiritually eloquent in his own defense:

***“And it shall come to pass, as soon as I am gone from you, that the Spirit of the Lord will carry you to a place I do not know; so when I go and tell Ahab, and he cannot find you, he will kill me. But I your servant have feared the Lord from my youth.”***

Can you believe what you’re reading? (“My nightmare has come full circle . . . Elijah, I’m the guy who greatly fears the Lord (Who is likely to do me dirt.). Once I tell Ahab you’re here, then you’ll cop out on me. Furthermore (nothing like a “positive confession” here) once Ahab turns up zero, I’m dead meat. Man, I’m the “fear-the-Lord-brother-from-my-youth” - so, why’s God picking on me?”)

Now, for the ultimate defense . . . Obadiah continues:

***“Was it not reported to my lord what I did when Jezebel killed the prophets of the Lord, how I hid one hundred men of the Lord’s prophets, fifty to a cave; and fed them with bread and water? And now you say, ‘Go, tell your master, ‘Elijah is here.’ He will kill me!”***

You see what a tangled web we weave, and the manifold nature of apostasy. But, now, at last, Obadiah gets to the point: “You see, Elijah, I’m so committed to keeping a testimony in this apostasy that I miraculously engineered a deal with Ahab (hard to believe that Ahab wasn’t in on this somehow) to stash what’s left of the Lord’s work (i.e., His prophets) in two—I say TWO (the number of testimony, be it oh so recluse)—caves. It’s not like I’ve been spiritually remiss here. I figure, something’s better than nothing. Besides, I’ve kept them on a hearty diet of bread and water (hard to come by around these parts), rather ingenious of me. In the darkness of the caves we’ve gotten to know the meaning of inner joy, camaraderie; and the meaning of: Be still and know thy God. We’re so still, so quiet, so recluse—there is just no way that we’d offend anyone; and when all is said and done: We’re still alive! I say this to bring attention to your desire to get me killed—now, who will care for the prophets in the Caves of Obadiah? Surely, you see my point in all this?”

Elijah has had it with Obadiah:

***“As the Lord of host lives, before whom I stand, I will surely present myself to him today.”*** (Translation: Get out of my way, Obadiah, I do not abide weasels—if you can’t grid up your loins to do the job, then Ahab will just have to ‘make my day.’”)

Behold, Obadiah’s witness: ***“So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him; and Ahab went to meet Elijah.”***

What went on between Obadiah telling Ahab and Ahab going to meet Elijah? We don't really know—but it would sure be interesting to find out. The above exchange is both sad and humorous. Sad, in that it is the truth of how we hide behind our so-called spirituality and high impressions of ourselves in the midst of apostasy. Believers are able to achieve a “martyr's complex” and the ability to rationalize their “stay” in such degradation—they have, in fact, completely lost their testimony, notwithstanding their protestations to the contrary. These attempts of physical survival on Obadiah's part only belie his spiritual bankruptcy and pride. The saving of his own skin was undoubtedly justified in his eyes in that it was saving the prophets of the Lord in his caves—they needed him for their own survival.

Thus, Obadiah became an enabler of the worst spiritual order. For us he represents those well meaning, but grossly deceived and deceiving, brethren who “survive” in the midst of Babylon—tainted by their connections to the system; desperately staving off the inevitable apostasy that commences to infect themselves once they realize that they should take a definitive stand against it. The more they struggle in the quicksand of apostasy, the deeper they sink into its mire. What awful results, what malignant pathologies lurked in the Caves of Obadiah—witness the leader of these entombed prophets and see if there be any comparisons with today's Christian leadership, especially in America!

No, Obadiah's strategies were utterly exposing—exposing the fact that no amount of spiritual acrobatics would convince the rigidity he sensed in Elijah's command: GO TELL AHAB, ELIJAH IS HERE! The real “master” of Obadiah was not the Lord God who he allegedly feared from his youth—it was Ahab, the Co-Master of Apostasy. How insidious was Obadiah's compromise—compromise, upon compromise, until he could not abide the truth any longer. Blinded by his own spiritual inconsistencies and survival techniques—he stands out in the Scripture as the quintessential believer who manages to “hang in there to the bitter end,” only to realize that all his “stick-to-it-tiveness” is pure folly.

There comes a point—a specific place and time—when a decision to get out of the current apostate system must be made. King Ahab gathered all of Israel for the final showdown between the forces of apostasy (the Prophets of Baal) and the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. You know the results and the final score. But the famous injunction given to Israel by Elijah can be heard today, for today's apostasy:

***“How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.” BUT THE PEOPLE ANSWERED HIM NOT A WORD*** (I Kings 18:21) (My emphasis).

Hedging to the uttermost—the Lord’s people waft between the two opinions. What they’re really saying is this: “We want our cake and eat it too—we want the best of both worlds—one foot in glory, and one on this tainted planet. We long for the leeks and garlic of Egypt—we yearn for the Good Land promised by our Lord. Why, just why, can’t we have both? In our hearts the Lord knows we are His—even if our flesh is exposed to the likes of Jezebel’s harlotries and witchcraft. We can stay here—actually, we’ve gotten so used to it, we’re hardly unnerved by the obscene antics witnessed daily by us all. Does it really make a difference? After all, wasn’t it Elijah that caused all the uproar? Prior to his coming we were fat and sassy—we had it made, our kitchens were full because Ashtaroth’s image was there. We, the husbands, let our wives enjoy the sight of the Queen of Heaven (Ashtaroth) mounted in our kitchens and, sure enough, she provided our households abundantly!” (See Jeremiah 44 for confirmation.)

The silence of God’s people today is so “deafening” it astonishes. Gone are the prophets of the Lord—hidden in the Caves of Obadiah—recoiling from their responsibilities to attest to the One True God, AND, against the apostasy running rife within the land. And, worse, there’s that spiritual giant of a midget, Obadiah, whose longevity has long lost its rewards. Obadiah—maintaining his Contacts of Apostasy—was thought by him (at its best) to be necessary until things got back to normal—whatever that meant in the spiritually twisted mind of this man.

Are we satisfied with “normal” in today’s Christianity? Do you find it your right of survival to prolong the agony of decision wavering between the most essential opinions of life? God or Baal (and Baal’s name comes in so many, many forms—they all mean “Full Replacement” of God’s life and purposes)—a decision is now mandatory. Yet, not a word is heard—we’ve blown our chance.

### **“I ALONE AM LEFT”**

The solitary, the isolated feeling, and the depressing loneliness that closes in on you in this warfare against apostasy—it’s called “The Elijah Complex.” Elijah overwhelmed by the apostasy of Israel, until he cried out: “*I alone am left*” (I Kings 18:14). Then, out of this apostate abyss comes a divine amazement: “*Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him*” (I Kings 18:18).

“Yes, Lord, You are proving to us, over and over again, that You have your 7,000 who have not bowed their knee, who long to testify of You in the sunshine of Your presence—though the brightness of the Son will take getting used to, abandoning the Caves of Obadiah is no longer an option. Lord, if that means meeting in twos and threes—whoever else is willing to come out of the caves,

Lord we're willing. All arguments and justifications aside—Lord, triumph over our fears, our reticence, our compromise.

“Lord, You know who my Ahab is! Come to me, set me free—free from the Caves of Obadiah. I'm not alone; show me those willing to stand, and not bow their knee. Lead me to those who *'Kiss the Son'* - and shun Baal. Lord, it's time, overtime, for me to come out for You . . . for Your Church . . . Amen.”

### **THE “SHRINE OF MICAH” or “THE USER-FRIENDLY CHURCH OF YESTERYEAR”**

The two illustrations of apostasy that I have chosen to amplify from the Scriptures, are purposefully done in a humorous style to highlight the absurdity of believers who persist in apostasy—but, there's nothing funny about apostasy, nothing! It is the bane of the gospel, the *“leaven that leavens the whole lump.”*

Apostasy—it was the driving force behind Israel's Babylonian captivity, let alone their treatment of the land—but it was apostasy that was rife in the land prior to Israel and Judah's captivity. Apostasy reached its climax in Israel and brought it face to face with the Image of the Tigris. Even in this, the Lord had mercy upon His people, then, and into the time in which we now live. From whence came such apostasy—behold its grand entrance into the one true religion of Elohim?

In Judges 17-18 there is a most amazing and true tale exposing what I believe to be the source of Israel's apostasy, which ran amuck in Ephraim and takes place in close proximity to Shiloh, where Israel's Tabernacle or Tent of Meeting, prior to the establishment of the Temple in Jerusalem, was located for so many years.

This badger skin structure was hardly the dynamic attraction for all to see—especially, for the Tyrians and Sidonians amongst the Canaanites of the north who trafficked from time to time through the region. In other words, hardly a fitting scene for the God of the Universe to inhabit—notwithstanding its interior, where the gold of the menorah glistened, the table of shewbread and the altar of incense held such significant spiritual implications. And, of course, the Holiest of All (“Holy of Holies”), where the Ark of the Covenant was located, wherein was Aaron's rod that budded, the hidden manna and the Tablets of the Law—again, all profound remembrances for Israel and all holding such spiritual significance for both Israel and the Church.

But, imagine the full-scale slaughter that one could witness in the outer court of this divine tent? The altar of sacrifice—that bloody operation was almost

continuous and especially active on those festival days of the year. Then there was the “accessibility issue” wherein the High Priest alone, once a year, with rope around his ankle (in case he didn’t make it out alive, could still be dragged from the Holiest of All where he was attempting to sprinkle blood upon the altar.). Talk about user-friendly—it was not!

All in this entire mysterious scene was not all that inviting—especially for guest visitors from the north and “left-over” Canaanites in the land who somehow survived Israel’s initial rout of their species. You’d have to have a “vivid imagination” to affirm the God of the Universe had taken up residence in that thing!

Enter the Shrine of Micah—that “User-Friendly Church,” where all the religious accoutrements would make the most religiously hardened feel right at home. Nope, nothing offensive allowed—friendly, approachable, “religiously-meaningful” rites could be witnessed by all, along with a super-responsive-to-your-every-need priest (or, if you prefer) Doctor of Divinity, who could dazzle the faithful in the most inoffensive manner known to ancient man. Complete with religious garb (Ephod), this wandering Levite was just meant to be and had been consecrated by Micah himself (founder and builder of the shrine) to administer in the way of Israel’s best; again, shekels were no object for the best, in this user-friendly Ephraim outpost. And, so convenient—right near the Tent of Meeting (You know, that drab little congregation keeps shriveling as the mega-congregation keeps bulging.).

Consider the source? Well, Micah had stolen some 1,100 shekels from his “God-fearing” mother (a really mixed up character was she). But Micah finally came clean—undoubtedly due to the “curse” placed on the stealer by the mixed up mother. The enthusiastic (and probably witch of a mother) exclaimed:

***“May you be blessed by the Lord my son!”*** (Slight MIXTURE here of the profane with the holy—but, whatever, sounds sincere to an apostate can be utilized on an “as needed basis”). There’s more: ***“I had wholly dedicated the silver from my hand to the Lord for my son*** (sure—check out what follows next), ***to make a carved image and a molded image: now therefore, I will return it to you*** (of course she holds back the lion’s share of the booty . . . Micah thought he had the whole enchilada and all he got was 2/11<sup>th</sup> of the take—some “return”) . . . ***then his mother took 200 shekels of silver and gave them to the silversmith, and he made it into a carved image and a molded image*** (Where’s Aaron when you need him?); ***and they were in the house of Micah. The man Micah had a shrine, and made an ephod and household idols; and he consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest”*** (Judges 17:2-5).

The story gets more convoluted as you progress. The “User-Friendly” Tent (i.e., our makeshift “User-Friendly Church”) really gets a-goin’ when a graduate from a seminary down south comes lookin’ for a pulpit. He was young, no doubt dynamic and hungry for position—but, better to say, **“I am a Levite from Bethlehem in Judah, and I am on my way to find a place to stay.”** The fast-thinking, ever-idea, user-friendly Micah lit up like a flashbulb: **“Dwell with me, and be a father and a priest to me, and I will give you ten shekels of silver (translation: “I can always hit Mom up for more.”) per year, a suit of clothes, and your sustenance”** (Judges 17:9-10).

Sounds like a plan to me. So . . . a “Consecration Service” was planned and held—all the “user-friendly” congregants, no doubt, attended this splendid affair, and, of course, Micah waxed prophetic, by declaring to all: **“Now I know that the Lord will be good to me, since I have a Levite as priest!”** Thus was born Second Micah of Ephraim, Israel (or was it First Micah, since the Tent of Meeting could hardly be called “First” - oh, well, what’s in a name anyway?). The key thing here is to get the Lord’s blessing upon our plans and/or simply “speak it into being” and so it is—*ipso facto*, “Isn’t God good!” Accoutrements, shrine, professional priest, consecration services, nothing but money to spare—and all, next to that ugly Tent of Meeting so you can really tell the difference! I mean: “Hello, this is Exciting Micah; can I help you?”

It wasn’t long before the Danites in Judges 18 got fed up with God’s promised inheritance on the plains of Philistia and them chariots of iron that didn’t look all that inviting—surely, we got a bum rap here. Thus, the Biblical thing to do would be to send five spies up to the extremity of Israel’s inheritance and scout out an easy hit (Word has it, it’s an easy take.).

As the five “men of valor” took off to the north, they obviously knew that the Tent of Meeting was in Ephraim, and, therefore, it might be a good idea to get a priestly blessing, no matter how bad it looks. But, upon second glance, they chanced to see a far more inviting spectacle: The Shrine of Micah.

“Man, check out that dazzling work of man—that sure looks more inviting, doesn’t it?” said Zorah to Eshtaol?

“Sure does. Say, isn’t that the voice of the young Levite who was checking out a pulpit among us?” said Eshtaol to Zorah.

The Levite, a bit embarrassed, tried to explain:

*“Thus and so Micah did for me. He has hired me, and I have become his priest.”* (Just read the chapter—all the verses are in there—interspersed with snide remarks by yours truly, you can tell the difference; I just can’t help it.)

“Far out!” hastened Zorah.

*“Please inquire of God, that we may know whether the journey on which we go will be prosperous”* (In other words: “Let’s see you strut your stuff preacher, it’s time to get a serious blessing here.”).

Here it comes:

*“And the priest said to them, ‘Go in peace. The presence of the Lord be with you on your way.’”*

Perfect! Well, cutting to the chase here—they checked out this commercial outpost of Sidon (as in Tyre and Sidon) and realized that the preacher was right about Laish! Upon their return, the five related their tale. Didn’t take long before 600 “men of war” realized this piece of cake could be had on the cheap—unlike the God-given inheritance that was causing them fits down on the plains of Philistia.

So, they girded up their loins and took off, the lot of them; but, instead of inquiring at the Tent of Meeting where a certain “turn-down” could be anticipated, they turned to the Shrine of Micah. Alas! That User-Friendly place where all is love and oneness—where affirmation, after affirmation can be had. Here, the Power of Positive Thinking first was conceived and later a book of that same title showed up in America?

Here’s where the “Powerhouse Five” really took off. They started grab bagging every religious-friendly artifact in sight with the full intent (unsolicited, of course) to cart the entire shootin’ match up to their soon-to-be new city of Dan—like in: Dan, Dan, he dah man, if he can’t do it, no one can!). Now, all this was going down while our Preacher Levite, ThD., was out front with the crowd of 600 Danites (no doubt, attracted to the huge crowd of would be User-Friendly Israelites). It wasn’t long before Preacher Levite exclaimed: *“What are you doing?”* (Like in: “I’m being ripped off here—what’s up?”)

Now comes the fun part—in the common vernacular, they, the Powerhouse Five, retorted: “Keep your mouth shut, and follow us!” But, it went down something like this:

***“And they said to him, ‘Be quiet, put your hand over your mouth, and come with us; be a father and a priest to us. Is it better for you to be a priest to the household of one man, or that you be a priest to a tribe and a family in Israel.’”***

In other words, “You do the math.” Wow! “Have Your Cake and Eat It Too Ministries” was launched right on the spot. Contract sold to the highest bidder! ***“The priest’s heart*** (so pure, too) ***was glad; and he took the ephod, the household idols, and the carved image, and took his place among the people”*** (No doubt “front and center” on some palanquin where he had a better and loftier view; and, besides, isn’t that where the ark was borne as the tribes crossed the Jordan so many years ago?). (Sense a little mixture here—like blatant idolatry?)

Somehow, unbelievably so, Micah was nowhere to be found when all this came down—probably checking out “user-friendly enhancements” for his shrine. Upon discovery of this massive rip-off, he lost it. First thought: Size means nothing! Incensed, along with other user-friendlyites of Second Micah, they stormed after the much larger men of valor band from Dan.

Catching up to the Danites (and, let’s not forget the Pontiff Maximus ensconced in their processional), Micah was confronted with: “You got a problem?” (i.e., ***“What ails you?”***). (Man, don’t you just love the KJV for its understatement?)

Micah, not one to give up “wheeling and dealing” so easily (“I mean, I can persuade anyone to buy into my deal—I could persuade them ‘we can franchise this thing’—don’t have to be so abrupt; I mean, I know you like what I’ve put together—after all, you’re stealing my idea and setup, along with my priest; Second Micah can turn into First Dan, Second Dan, or whatever you wish. It’s reproducible—I’ll even give you the template (of course, I’ve got to keep the Original because all over Israel and the Middle East user-friendly seekers will be awed by these Original techniques; naturally, for a seminar fee, which will include: the lectures (along with “free” CDs), slides, books, prints, etc.)) . . . Man, am I good, or what?”)

“So, what’s up with this: ‘What ails you’ stuff?”

At this point, the Danites got a little pesky:

“Micah, ***‘Do not let your voice be heard among us, lest angry men fall upon you, and you lose your life, with the lives of our household!’***” Isn’t the Bible gentle? The Danites sound like a bunch of Mafioso (no offense to any ethic group here), but I just can’t help telling it in contemporary lingo: “Hey, Micah,

what's it to you? We can arrange for this to be a lot more pleasant than you think! Do you see a problem Zorah? How's about you, Eshtaol? Nah, no one sees a problem around here but you, Micah? So, how can there be a problem?"

Whoops, now it's Micah debut:

"You know, come to think of it (and, now that you have so clearly pointed it out to me), you're right, I really don't have a problem after all. Grief, you'll have to forgive the intrusion. Incidentally, I wish you all well and even God's speed on your prosperous journey and your soon-to-be lovely inheritance that YOUR User-Friendly Levite Priest so eloquently prophesized to you. Furthermore, thank you for allowing me to see the light—I'll be looking forward to visiting at First Dan in the not too distant; and, again, it's been a pleasure meeting your acquaintance and doing business with such fine gentlemen!"

Sure enough, the Danites, along with their built-in User-Friendly Levite Priest, took Laish by storm, and commenced what became the "toilet bowl" of Israel's Apostasy, to wit:

***"Then the children of Dan set up for themselves the carved image; and Jonathan the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan until the day of the captivity of the land. So they set up for themselves Micah's carved image which he made, all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh."***

Now, is there any wonder why the Tribe of Dan is NOT mentioned in Revelation 7:5-8? The Lord hates apostasy—plain and simple; and, what you have witnessed here in the stories of Obadiah and Micah is precisely the type of apostasy over which the Lord is outraged.

Expositors are loathe to correlate the Jezebel of Ahab with the Jezebel of the Church in Thyatira—that great Church of apostasy that bespeaks, according to G. H. Pember,<sup>2</sup> of the State and Church merger under Rome and survives to this day; but, the allusions and comparisons are so striking, that one would have to be theologically moronic not to recognize the identity of the woman in Thyatira is the spiritual counterpart to that woman, Jezebel. Furthermore, as Jezebel clearly represents all that is apostate, that Mother of Harlots, that Woman of Wickedness—even so, the Jezebel of Thyatira is the epitome of the same and the tragic display of absolute apostasy within the Church!

And, what did the Lord have against the Church in Thyatira:

*“Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that (lit., according to M., “your wife Jezebel”) woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach (or “teaches and seduces”) and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality (lit., “repent, and she does not want to repent of her sexual immorality”), and she did not repent. Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works. Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden” (Revelation 2:20-24).*

Commentary on this could be exhaustive. Suffice it to say, the “depths of Satan” are found within the Apostate Church—yes, there are those who overcome therein, but the mixture she imbibes in the cup of her fornication is so potent, it is a miracle that they who abide therein can still *“hold fast what you have till I come.”*

Both Israel’s apostasies of antiquity, and the Church’s aggrandizements with the Merchants of the Earth—yes, her unmitigated interplay with today’s wealth and prosperity gospel, all the while fomenting rationalizations that these alleged “blessings” of materialism bespeak of successful Christian living in the modern era, able to ingratiate themselves before their fawning leadership through their abundant contributions—bear unbelievable resemblance to the tactical deceits of Jezebel.

Again, no amazement that the HARLOT of Babylon the Great sustains her identity through both Revelation Chapter 17 and Chapter 18! She is APOSTATE, not only because she relishes the support of this Beastly State, but she is APOSTATE in that she inculcates herself by her mercantile associations who bewail her rapacious inferno. Is there not a correlation between her Babylonian reliance upon the State and her fraternization with the wealth of the world and its merchants?

How is it that the leading lights of American Evangelicalism could be seen with Republican politicians and the business elites of the U.S.A.? The sight was despicable—how dare they flaunt their associations with the politically powerful and business magnates in galas and party boats during the 2000 Philadelphia Convention? They, the Church, providing her foot soldiers to battle at the polls,

well deserved a table in the presence of the Kings and Merchants of the earth! Yet, their Jesus once said: *“Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have their nests, but the Son of Man has no where to lay His head.”*

## **APOSTASY: MIXING THE GOSPEL WITH GENTILE WORLD POWER**

Although much more can be said of the commercial entanglements of numerous “born-again” brethren throughout, in the main, the USA and how this despicable characteristic equates to the Father’s house becoming a latter-day “House of Merchandise”; however, we must excuse ourselves from this “alliance made in hell” between the Members of His Body and the Merchants of the Earth, and give further exploration to the deceit of mixing religion with politics—for it is here that the stark outrage of the divine is measured!

Let it be clear from the outset that the occult and its practices that infuriate God’s purity and witness of His people—Christendom, and, in particular, the so-called “believing Church” (let alone Israel of the flesh)—is a real threat; however, in its truest meaning, “Apostasy” (i.e., “the falling away from the faith”) in its “Babylonian context” has far less to do with “sorcery” (Revelation 18:23) and the accouterments thereof (e.g., *“the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, and the soothsayers”* (Daniel 2:27); or channelers, diviners, new age movements in general, self-actualization/realization, theosophy, transcendental meditation, ad nausea). However, not to demean the significance of the threatening blast to True Christianity that these “winds of doctrine” pose to the Church, they are in no way equal to the image of the Woman who rides the Beast!

Pointedly: Apostasy, akin to what took place in ancient Israel—especially in the reign of King Ahab and his Gentile-born Queen Jezebel of Tyre and Sidon—is the absolute convergence of the religion of the One True God with that of the power of the State! Here we have a princess, Jezebel, whose father, Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians, who was a zealous participant in the worship of Baal. Well did she know the mysteries of the Canaanite religion and its entanglements with the mystery religion of Babylon.

Her peculiar familiarity with religion and politics, as well as Tyre’s commercial intrigues and how their international trading empire incorporated temple “worship” to spread its economic hegemony throughout the Mediterranean, represents an ideal trinitarian form of apostasy wherein religion, politics and commerce depict prophetic Babylon.

Her expertise in religious subterfuge and commercial exploitation, coupled with political power—and how to manipulate the three—was unexcelled. King

Ethbaal was unsurpassed in his ruthlessness, having been High Priest of Baal; he now sought, through assassination, the kingship of the ancient Phoenicians. Indeed, he sought to bring the “counsel of peace” between them both: The State and Religion – the kingship and the priesthood, the Church and the State. So, it is within this context, did “that woman Jezebel” and Israel’s seventh and worst king (I Kings 16:33) ascend the throne of Israel and become her king and queen.

Their “commercial tryst” bore no semblance of commitment and matrimonial bliss. No, as Solomon (I Kings 11:1-5), King Ahab sought commercial alliances to enforce his political control over the masses and to suffice his sensual and greedy aspirations. The fact that Ahab had some seventy sons by “women of the court” demonstrates the degradation and charade of the marriage bed (II Kings 10:1).

Furthermore, the fertile soils of apostasy were found between Israel and Tyre through Dan’s unholy inheritance grab centuries earlier, wherein the tribe of Dan seized the northernmost territory of Israel—for its environs were predisposed to trade with Tyre and Sidon. Dan’s ancient apostasy is legendary—integrating the true religion of Jehovah with the Canaanite deities of Baal and Ashtaroth (*vide*. Judges 17 and 18). We must consider the inspiration of the Scriptures in leaving out the Tribe of Dan in sealing the first mentioning of the 144,000 as a rebuke to this compromise (Revelation 7:5-8), but reconsider their possible repositioning within the Holy City (Revelation 21:21) as a triumph of grace and faithfulness of a covenant-keeping God.

Now, having superficially explored the prototype of Biblical apostasy, may I concentrate your attention upon the earth’s most unique religious/secular mixture to date: The United States of America and its burgeoning relationship with conservative Christianity, again, in particular, evangelical Christianity—for it is here that apostasy’s most prophetically grotesque appearance is recognized. I do this at the risk of accusations that such political analysis has little to do with spiritual matters; however, understanding the times in which we live is a Biblical injunction that bears credibility:

***“ . . . of the sons of Issachar who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do . . . ”*** (I Chronicles 12:32).

At first glance, and since ***“the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one”*** (I John 5:19), it appears that an argument can be made in support that little difference exists between nations insofar as evil is concerned; however, the Bible is altogether clear regarding such differentiation along many lines and levels (e.g., in the Image in Daniel there are “principalities” identified as “the prince of Persia” and the “prince of Greece” – let alone copious Biblical examples that

delineate differences among nations, tribes, peoples; the “sheep and goat” nations (Matthew 25:32-33), etc.).

Even so, regarding the end-time’s Babylon, which shall arise at the “End of Days” (i.e., the last of the Last Days, for the “Last Days” or “Latter Days” surely commenced at the time of Jesus’ earthly ministry), we observe that its physicality bears remarkable resemblance to a multitude of Biblical descriptions, which resoundingly point to our shores! But, the chief evidence that convicts us of Babylon’s identity is this insidious characteristic of ancient apostasy.

Consider: the nations of Russia, Germany, Japan (of course), and even of Canada, etc., have little or no claim upon professing a Christian character—even the European Union’s Constitution (notwithstanding the Catholic heritage of many of its states, let alone the long history of Christianity (Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox)), with secular revulsion refuses to acknowledge its Christian heritage within that document to the chagrin of its more Catholic constituents. Yet, it is here that a glaring differentiation is noted: The United States of America—with multitudes of its leaders and people—feign to be “of Christ” – when, in point of fact, she (i.e., America) is part and parcel of the “prince of this world’s” empire. Her service to the prince of this world, notwithstanding the Christian protestations to the contrary, is fraught with abominable indignities—so much so, that to decry her ties with both Egypt and Sodom, and of her many curses written on both sides of the Flying Scroll, could literally cover the entire earth if pen could be found to write such a despicable diatribe.

The iniquity committed by the aforementioned nations (for there is sufficient wickedness to go around) is done outside the pale of Christianity—i.e., they hold no claim to divine proclivity. They bear no mystique with the “Light and the Glory” ascribed by a vast list of Christian Americans who see our history as a “City set on a hill which cannot be hid.” The concept of the “Christian nation” is highly esteemed by a growing number of American Christians and is cloaked in a variety of platitudes—everything from “God bless America” to “holding forth the traditions of our founding fathers.” Think it not peculiar the film “Of Gods and Generals” premiered to our troops prior to its official release and invasion of Iraq—virtually deifying the coming battle as if God fully blessed the coming onslaught!

Indeed, its current President (George W. Bush), and even its Attorney General (John Ashcroft) and the head of its National Security Council (Condoleezza Rice), as well as a multitude of members from both Houses of Congress, including scores of military, business, and entertainment leaders—let alone tens of millions of its nearly 300 million population, claim the nation for Christ and the Church. It is no small phenomenon in modern times that America

bears a unique distinction of holding forth the most vibrant “Patriotic Church” on the globe.

And for all her religiosity—what testimony is held forth to the nations who behold the “city set on a hill which cannot be hid?” How do the “have nots,” and for that matter, “the haves” of the world view the Woman of Wickedness within her commercial ephah?

Regrettably, and increasingly, it is one permeated by violence, oppression, murder, war, thievery at the highest levels; while trafficking in the bodies and souls of men (cheap labor)—all from a nation, which allegedly bears witness to the claims of the Savior.

What world leader of an earthly kingdom or tribal chieftain of the smallest tribe, can announce his entry and quest for headship—even of the most powerful nation on the planet—under the ordination of the Almighty Himself; to wit, that a call went up to solicit a cast of the most powerful shepherds and evangelical lay leaders of the American Church to attend, at the Governor’s Mansion in Austin, Texas, a most incredible ceremony? Here, the announcement to run for the Presidency was made by Mr. Bush; here, the hands of this leadership were placed upon his head, which was anointed with oil—and prayers were made to solicit divine intervention into the affairs of men through this man for the 2000 election. These “Evangelical stakeholders” experienced an unforgettable event—an event, which in today’s modern world, is unprecedented in the annals of modern governments!

The secular states of Europe find this religious attachment to American government unfathomable at best, and her resurgent moral authority, as nothing more than self-righteous posturing and “cowboy” diplomacy gone amok. When they realize it is God-fearing Americans, who simply refuse to agree with the noble but mendacious concept of service to the State, they are flabbergasted, to say the least; instead, they see Christians at the lead who fane honesty in the name of Christ’s Kingdom, while all the while deeply indebted to the mammon of unrighteousness and the political power that comes from the State. Unfortunately, their consternation is compromised by their own greed—hardly avirulent in its malignant and avaricious qualities (e.g., the French, Germans and Russians are currently playing a “catch 22” game with the USA in forgiving old Saddam debts, while trying to cash in on post-Saddam Iraq’s reconstruction—Alas! “To give or not to give? That is the question—but how can we get, while giving, is the greater art of diplomacy?”).

But, Europe’s outrage centers on the moral intransigence of this Woman who rides the Beast! Akin to a group of white sharks, circling for the kill, they

will lunge out at one another, if and when their instincts dictate to suffice their insatiable cravings.

Meanwhile, believers in America unwittingly buttress these righteous projections perceived by the world by waging their “cultural wars” upon our own shores—wars without, and wars within.

There’s an “enemy within” who must be stopped—that “enemy” is another vast sea of humans who represent, according to people like Michael Savage and other conservative talk show hosts, the greatest threat to America’s liberty and security, since the founding of the experiment. The enemy resides in the Democrat Party, in the ACLU, most of Hollywood, Labor’s leadership, the “femi-Nazis,” the entire “Cabaret Society” and is filled with hundreds of thousands of “America haters, pinkos, socialists and commies” who need to shut up and get behind the President or suffer the ultimate consequences for their behavior and subversion—they should unite behind the War on Terrorism!

Unwittingly, the people of God have been distracted by neocons who permeate the airwaves with “social issues” – while giving superficial lip service, at best, to the monstrous disparity of wealth taking place in their own backyards. The downsizing, outsourcing, reallocation of resources and what has become known as the Wal-martization of the American workplace continues unabated to this day.

I’d like to digress further on America’s New World Order System through reinforcement of this politically sensitive caricature of Americana, by quoting from financier George Soros’ recent article, entitled: *The Bubble of American Supremacy*:

“Even so, September 11 could not have changed the course of history to the extent that it has if President Bush had not responded to it the way he did. He declared war on terrorism, and under that guise implemented a radical foreign-policy agenda whose underlying principles predated the tragedy. Those principles can be summed up as follows: International relations are relations of power, not law; power prevails and law legitimizes what prevails. The United States is unquestionably the dominant power in the post-Cold War world; it is therefore in a position to impose its views, interests, and values. The world would benefit from adopting those values, because the American model has demonstrated its superiority. The Clinton and first Bush Administrations failed to use the full potential of American power. This must be corrected; the United States must find a way to assert its supremacy in the world.

“September 11 removed both obstacles. President Bush declared war on terrorism, and the nation lined up behind its President. Then the Bush Administration proceeded to exploit the terrorist attack for its own purposes. It fostered the fear that has gripped the country in order to keep the nation united behind the President, and it used the war on terrorism to execute an agenda of American supremacy. That is how September 11 changed the course of history.

“It is ironic that the government of the most successful open society in the world should have fallen into the hands of people who ignore the first principles of open society. At home Attorney General John Ashcroft has used the war on terrorism to curtail civil liberties. Abroad the United States is trying to impose its views and interests through the use of military force. The invasion of Iraq was the first practical application of the Bush doctrine, and it has turned out to be counterproductive. A chasm has opened between America and the rest of the world.

“The size of the chasm is impressive. On September 12, 2001, a special meeting of the North Atlantic Council invoked Article 5 of the NATO Treaty for the first time in the alliance's history, calling on all member states to treat the terrorist attack on the United States as an attack upon their own soil. The United Nations promptly endorsed punitive U.S. action against al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. A little more than a year later the United States could not secure a UN resolution to endorse the invasion of Iraq. Gerhard Schröder won re-election in Germany by refusing to cooperate with the United States. In South Korea an underdog candidate was elected to the presidency because he was considered the least friendly to the United States; many South Koreans regard the United States as a greater danger to their security than North Korea. A large majority throughout the world opposed the war on Iraq.

“September 11 introduced a discontinuity into American foreign policy. Violations of American standards of behavior that would have been considered objectionable in ordinary times became accepted as appropriate to the circumstances. The abnormal, the radical, and the extreme have been redefined as normal. The advocates of continuity have been pursuing a rearguard action ever since.”

What Soros, and other political pundits on the Left fail to realize—though more are discerning the obvious—is, that although America’s projection of military might (under the Bush Doctrine) has radically changed the impression of most nations on earth toward her intentions, they either underemphasize or totally dismiss the religious component which has propelled this new image upon the world scene wherein “wars of selective national interest,” through the Bush doctrine of “preemptive unilateralism”—cloaked in the guise of democratic globalism—prevails.

Furthermore, the American Christianity which is obsessed in fighting the current War on Terrorism, is the same American Christianity that increasingly integrates its gospel with “prosperity and power”—twisting the Scriptures to justify their aggrandizements. Complicit in this spiritual charade is the laity, who, in the main, either through neglect or assent, celebrate this travesty; and, rather than aligning themselves with the poor carpenter from Nazareth (“*Who for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich*”), have sided with mammon and have sought the “*riches of this world*” and, like the Church of the Laodiceans finds itself “*. . . rich, having become wealthy, and have need of nothing . . . and do not know that (they) are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked*” (Revelation 3:17).

The height of spiritual hypocrisy is reported, virtually week after week, by the American national press, who has become the de facto “prophetic voice” of the Church in exile—for most prophetic voices, like Elijah, who should expose this filthy underwear, refuse, lest they be called up before the councils and disfellowshipped. Examples of commercial fascination abound, as the feeding frenzy of the market-driven Laodicean Church blindly stumbles along.

Of late, some \$163 million was taken from evangelical ministries and churches and frittered away in one of the nation’s most notorious Ponzi scams. Ministries like Benny Hinn, Christ for the Nations (Reinhard Bonke), the Assemblies of God, Northern California District (Dr. Glenn Cole), Mariland Hickey, and scores of unsuspecting pastors and smaller denominations and churches, were swept up into the greed of “something for nothing” and promises of 50% return on their investments. Now, the IRS, the SEC, and the FBI are engaged in one of the worst commercial exploitations in the world of religion.<sup>4</sup>

Apparently, one of the parishioners who lost \$20,000 quoted the Bible, to wit: “The Bible teaches that God delights in the prosperity of his servants, but it also teaches us not to love wealth, and it certainly teaches against greed.”

Ponzis use money from later investors to pay artificially high returns to early investors, thus attracting even more investment (so-called “new blood”

added atop the ascending “pyramid scheme”). This later investment pool, brewed by an ex-evangelist by the name of Gregory Earl Setser of San Bernardino County, CA (47), along with his wife, Cynthia, his sister, Deborah Setser, and his daughter-in-law Charnelle Setser, also promised in the EVANGELICAL AFFINITY PONZI huge profits (e.g. “returns of up to 50 percent within six months and were assured only one in 10,000 deals went bad”).

Scores of outraged parishioners called for the resignation of Cole (December, 2003) for abuse of church funds.

Not to be outdone, evangelicals were again taken to the cleaners in another Ponzi at the very same time the Stezers were bilking the brethren. This time a Mormon by the name of James Paul Lewis Jr. of Financial Advisory Consultants in Lake Forest, California bilked some 5,200 clients across America, pouring 813 million dollars into his Southern California investment fund. The Associated Press carried the story from Sacramento.<sup>5</sup> Adding insult to injury, Lewis has been using Patriot I as an excuse not to grant refund requests, saying that millions of dollars in investments had been frozen by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Again, this is what is called an “affinity fraud” in which—Lewis sent pictures of his family out to clients—smiling all the way to the bank with their money. Investors, according to AP “never provided clients with any details on how it invests their money” (the firm apparently was in operation longer than any other Ponzi scam in America—upwards of ten years). What I have written here is the tip of an iceberg and something read in local newspapers just in the past month! Can you imagine what a year brings forth?

Hearken to this word, Church, and hearken you must:

***“For we are not, as so many, PEDDLING (or “adulterating for gain” or “hawking”) the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ” (II Corinthians 2:17).***

And again:

***“But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling (again: “adulterating for gain”) the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God” (II Corinthians 4:4).***

Today's evangelical Church, particularly in America, has so compromised herself, so "adulterated" herself—prostituted herself—and has become, as the "merchants of the earth" in order to maximize her worth and impact upon the world by such worldly means, that the words of our Lord find these HAWKERS OF THE WORD OF GOD reprehensible at best, and awaiting the harshest of judgments at worst, thinking that filthy lucre bespeaks blessing and, *ipso facto*, power:

***"Because you (the Laodicean Church of America) say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent"*** (Revelation 3:17-18).

Now do you see this woman?

***"This is Wickedness!" And he thrust her down into the basket, and threw the lead cover over its mouth . . . 'Where are they carrying the basket?' And he said to me, 'To build a house for it in the land of Shinar; when it is ready, the basket will be set there on its base'"*** (Zechariah 5:8, 10-11).

## **DISCERNMENT MINISTRIES?**

'Tis apostasy, they say, when occult and sorcery embed themselves within the Church and Israel of old. Those American Evangelicals rightly discern her sorceries as a plague upon the House of God. But, Alas! These same "Discernment Ministries" have grossly overlooked her most debilitating pathologies—her harlotries and fornications with the King of Babylon (the State) and the King of Tyre (the Merchants of the Earth). Their grievous oversight is either intentional or demonstrates a spiritual myopia of Biblical proportions. To their credit have they discerned her flirtations with the gospel of greed—but their discernments are disconnected from her fornications, which are exacerbated when that quest for wealth is aligned with the State!

A State, which eventually turns on her—for only Christ has come that we might have ***"life and have it more abundantly"***—but the Beast/Antichrist can only hate and kill and bring death: ***"These will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire"*** (Revelation 17:16).

Think it not difficult to understand why the angel said to John:

***“Why did you marvel? I will tell you the mystery (i.e., “the hidden truth”) of the woman and of the beast that carries her” (Revelation 17:7).***

Barnhouse, Ironside, McGee, Dallas Theological Seminary, Ladd, Gundry, and many expositors of the Scriptures, have clearly seen the “Unholy Trinity” of Babylon the Great: The Apostate Church (Religious Babylon—Mother of Harlots); Commercial Babylon (The King of Tyre); and Political/Civil Babylon (The Beast and False Prophet—the Leadership of Babylon the Great) and witness their demise in Revelation 17 (Religious Babylon); Revelation 18 (Commercial Babylon); and Revelation 19 (Civil/Political Babylon).<sup>6</sup> But, Alas! Her Religious and Commercial identities are but ONE WOMAN—that “Woman of Wickedness.”

This Woman—yes, this end-times Apostate Harlot is easily identified both in Zechariah and in the Revelation. She, the SEDUCTRESS of saint and sinner, of men and merchants—awaits her executioner. She gilded herself with the saints of the Most High—but inwardly she was full of iniquities. She rides the Beast who will yet devour her and she fornicates with all the merchants of the earth—Who is like this Great City, Babylon? ***“Your merchants were the great men of the earth, for by your sorcery all the nations were deceived . . . and in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth”*** (Revelation 18:23b-24).

Her final catastrophe shall match her idolatries, wickednesses, iniquities, adulteries, fornications, lies, thievery, falsehoods, exploitations, harlotries—yea, all her whoredoms:

***“Then a mighty angel took up a stone  
like a great millstone and threw  
it into the sea, saying,  
‘Thus with violence, the Great City Babylon shall be thrown down,  
and shall not be found any more.’”***  
(Revelation 18:21)

## **LOOK CLOSELY**

Dear friends, the Lord has declared that this final judgment awaits such an apostate, wholly compromised and defiled Church—though she be gilded with the saints of the Most High. They (i.e., the “Precious Stones of the Lord”) are enjoined with frightful clarity: ***“Come out of her, my people, lest you share in***

*her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities”* (Revelation 18:4-5).

Today, upon the Plain of Shinar, an imagery of prophetic magnitude descends upon the earth. That Climax of Civilization—the Epitome of Sodom and Egypt; through greed and avarice; through cunning and deceit; and through military might; this “lover of fortresses” has gone forth both conquering and to conquer—“*Who shall make war against him?*”

And, united in his endeavors, there is this Woman of Wickedness, the Mother of Harlots, who rides upon him in victory—who celebrates by her uplifted cup for all to see, that she fully exults in her deceitful posture; as she strides this seven-headed, ten-horned Monster of Babylon. She is so closely identified with her King of Babylon, that she herself, along with all her apostasies and merchandising, is identified as that Great City, Babylon! She is the legacy of Queen Jezebel, the commercial apostasy fomented by an alliance made in hell between the followers of Elohim (King Ahab) and the King of Tyre (Jezebel).

Look closely—she has “morphed” once again—this time, the Church’s rider bridles her Beast so closely. The two are a formidable match—both rider and beast—for they have conspired in the greatest deceit of the ages: Believers and Beast—and yet, *ye know not what spirit ye are of!*

Look, look closely—yes, there is Religious Babylon found in Revelation 17, who shall be devoured by the ten-horned, seven-headed Beast from the abyss (Revelation 17:16-17); but, her harlotries, as Mystery Babylon, Mother of Harlots, extend into the description of Commercial Babylon found in Revelation 18, for the closing verse of Revelation 17 (vs. 18) must be considered:

*“And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth.”*

Compounding her true identity in its fullness, we find that the SAME ONE, Mother of Harlots, who is “*drunk with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus*” in Revelation 17:6 is the SAME one spoken of in Revelation 18:24—for “*in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth.*”

Fathom, for a moment, the depth of her apostasy—but do not escape the contemporary role she now plays; however, the distance of conquistador and crusader, whose commercial aspirations and religious motivations are legendary, seems a rather safe and secure observation, doesn’t it? Yet, are future Babylon’s harlotries, filled with inspiration and intoxication, not as rueful as her past? Indeed—for now with her inventions and technologies, she is all the more able to

suppress her foes, and enslave her masses; and, YES, all in the name of God! Outrage of outrage—she continues unabated, undaunted in her universal quest for aggrandizements in the name of religion!

There is but one Woman of Wickedness found in the Bible—Zechariah 5:5-11, whose Babylonian destination reveals her true nature—for she is imprisoned in a commercial ephah headed for her base on the Plains of Shinar where she belongs! Ancient Babylon, cradle of theocratic civilizations, of the hydra-headed python of polytheism—where politics, commerce and religion consummate in unholy, trinitarian evil! We shall elaborate more fully upon her multiple personalities and her irrepressible abilities to corrupt and to fornicate with the *kings and merchants* of the earth—for both the political and commercial is in view here in her loveless desires to enrich herself and to relish the support of her admirers.

But, lo, her doom is sure:

***“For true and righteous are His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants shed by her”*** (Revelation 19:2).

Amazed and “flabbergasted” (Revelation 17:7) when you see her—marvel no further, for this same Mother of Harlots, could, in the name of God and of Christ, slay the followers of the Lamb and of them who keep the commandments of God! Inquisition, crusades, pogroms, witch-hunts, religious wars and conquests in the name of Christ—her legacy is fraught with the blood of His servants: MARVEL NOT! The convergence of piety, profits and politics collide as “The Woman rides the Beast” in Revelation 17. We talk as if the mystery of the Church was utterly undisclosed in the Hebrew text and apparently remains but a “hidden truth” (i.e., “mystery”)—but the hidden truth of the Church has been “revealed” to us (i.e., ***“Christ in you, the hope of glory”***). Furthermore, this revealed “hidden truth” of the Church is clearly spoken about amongst the Hebrew prophets (as we pointed out in the Introduction of this tome).

Likewise, ***“Mystery, Babylon the Great”*** (Revelation 17:5), the antithesis of the hidden mystery of the Church is, I believe, disclosed amongst these same Hebrew prophets. The prophets who spoke of the ***“sufferings of Christ and the glories which shall follow”*** were not remiss to inscribe the tales and prophetic expressions of Mystery Babylon the Great, Mother of Harlots, the Woman of Wickedness! Behold, this Woman whose name is Wickedness shall be purged from Zion and removed by Two Women with wings of a stroke to Babylon’s site.

