***The Origin of the Roman Catholic Church, No. 1

RV24-02***

Open your Bibles once more to Revelation 2:20. We have seen that the church in Thyatira had a Jezebel-like female who was corrupting the congregation with the doctrines and practices of Babylonian paganism. The pastor-teacher and the congregation as a whole were condemned by Jesus Christ for tolerating the spiritual corruptions of this woman. The Thyatira Jezebel was reenacting the polluting of true religion which had characterized the Old Testament Jezebel.

**The Jezebel at Thyatira**

Jesus Christ said to this congregation, "Notwithstanding, in spite of these good things that I have to say about some of you in that church, I have against you because you tolerate (or you allow) that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess." The word "calls" is the Greek word "lego." This is a word for speaking, but it is the Greek word for speaking which directs our attention to the meaning of what she is saying rather than the words themselves. This Jezebel-like female in Thyatira claims to be proclaiming the mind of God. It is in the present tense. She was making this as a continual claim. It is active voice. She herself is making the claim. Other people were not making this for her. She actually said, "I talk for God. I speak for God. I convey God's thinking to you." It's a participle – a statement of a principle.

The word "herself" ("who calls herself") is the Greek word "heautou." This is what we call a reflexive pronoun, and it stresses that this claim is being made about her own person. She is referring to herself. We would translate this as "the one calling herself." This word is to emphasize that this woman is talking specifically about her own person in making these claims.

**A Prophetess**

What is the claim that she makes? That she is a prophetess. This is the Greek word "prophetis." "Prophetis" is a noun that means "prophetess." It is a person with a spiritual gift of being able to tell not only the future, but of conveying divine viewpoint on some present issue. This word is only used two other times in the New Testament – in Luke 2:36 and in Acts 21:9. In both those references it is conveying the same idea of somebody who's conveying what God thinks about some subject.

The Thyatira Jezebel is claiming to be a spokeswoman with communications from God. When she does that, she is assuming a position of spiritual authority, and when she exercised that position within the Thyatira congregation, which is what she was doing, she was claiming spiritual authority over men. She is claiming that she can tell the male leadership what God thinks. This, of course, violates the principle of 1 Timothy 2:12 where Paul says, "But I don't permit a woman to teach nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." Paul is speaking under the guidance of the Holy Spirit of a divine principle. You do not have any such thing as women preachers in the New Testament. You do not have any such things as women pastor-teachers. That gift is never given to a woman. It is always reserved for the males of the human race. So right away we know that this woman is not speaking for God. When she makes this claim of being a spokeswoman for God, we know immediately she is speaking for the devil, for she cannot have this gift. However, there were some people in Thyatira, just as there are people today in the charismatic movement who follow female preachers. They hear the mind of Satan when they do that, instead of the mind of Jesus Christ.

The Greek Bible, following these words, "The one who calls herself a prophetess," has the Greek word "kai" ("and"). The King James translation doesn't indicate that, but that word for "and" ("kai") indicates an addition concerning this woman. First of all, here is what Jesus Christ holds against this church: "You've got a woman in your congregation that's going around saying, 'I have the gift of prophecy, and I can communicate to you what God thinks.'" She doesn't simply claim that she is using some words that she's heard in a vision that she's repeating, or some words that God has given her in a dream that she's repeating. The emphasis is not on the words she uses. The emphasis is on the message: "I have a message from God, and I want you to listen to me."

Unless you have been in charismatic circles, and have attended charismatic meetings, you do not grasp the relationship of this to the charismatic movement today, because this is what women constantly do in charismatic meetings. They get up and say, "I have a prophecy from God." They are doing exactly what this Jezebel-like woman did here in Thyatira, and they are claiming to have a message to deliver to the congregation from God. Well, if you have a message from God, then you have a message that is comparable to the Scriptures, because that's what the Bible is. It's a message from God. If you, as a woman, stand up and say, "I have a message from God," then you are instructing us, as a congregation, including the men in the congregation. The apostle Paul says God never does that. God does not work in that way. It violates the relationship of the order of authority within the human race, and God will not break His own arrangement.

So the word "and" gives us an addition now as to what this woman is doing beside this. What is she doing? She is teaching. The Greek word is "didasko." This is the word that means "for giving instruction." Here it is referring to giving doctrinal instruction. It's in the present tense, which means that this woman is always doing this. She's giving instruction in spiritual matters. It's in the active voice, which means that she does this herself. She is doing the teaching. She elects to do it. It's indicative. It's a statement of fact.

Again, you have the word "kai," indicating the addition of another point. She's doing something else. She's "seducing." The Greek word is "planao." The word "planao" actually means to lead astray; that is, to cause people to wander away from divine viewpoint. This is in the present tense, so again we have indicated to us that she's doing this all the time. Again, it's active voice which tells us that she is personally doing this. She is personally deliberately going about to lead people astray. It's indicative in its mood, which indicates a statement of fact. At this point, the Lord Jesus Christ indicates a very personal interest in what she is leading astray, because He uses the word "My" which is the Greek word "emos," which is a possessive adjective which emphasizes the personal possession of Jesus Christ.

What is this the personal possession of? Of what he calls the "doulos." This is "My servants," or literally, "My slaves," or "My bond servants," which is the relationship that every believer has to Jesus Christ. It is in the plural so that he is referring to all those within the circle of the influence of the Thyatira church who make up the royal family of God. She is leading the actual bondslaves (the believers – the born again people in Jesus Christ) astray within that congregation.

**Sexual Immorality**

So we translate it like this: "This Jezebel-like woman, calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond servants astray." She leads them astray. In what way? This is hard to believe. You're talking about a Christian congregation, and it's hard to believe that there's a woman in the congregation who's actually leading the people astray in this specific way. That is to commit fornication. The Greek word is "porneuo" from which you can see we get our English word "pornography." And "porneuo" means just exactly that: sexual immorality; or, illicit and debased sexual practices of various kinds. It is in the aorist tense, indicating that at certain points, members of the congregation, upon listening to this woman, engage in illicit sex. It's in the active voice which indicates that they chose to do this after listening to this Jezebel-like woman. It's in the infinitive mood which indicates to us the results of this woman's teaching.

Jezebel of Thyatira, believe it or not, was influencing church members to engage in sexual sins. Of course, this would be done by those in the congregation who were negative to doctrine to begin with. They had negative volition toward sound doctrine, and so they were willing to listen to the views of this woman. They were willing to recognize her authority. These are the same features that we have discovered in studying the Jezebel of old that she was guilty of doing. This is exactly what the Jezebel of old was doing in the incorporating of Baal worship into the nation of Israel. Sexual immorality was at the heart of Baal worship. The old Jezebel was leading the people of God in the Old Testament of that practice. The New Testament Jezebel was doing precisely the same thing.

Now you begin to get a little better idea of how horrified the Lord Jesus Christ is that He has to talk to this church in this way: that they would not (knowing that this existed) have taken action on it themselves and called a halt to it. Instead, they're going to pursue Christian unity. Under the guise of some idea of love, they're not going to crack down and call a halt to this woman's activities. They commit fornication, but that's not all.

Again, the Greek Bible throws the word "and" ("kai") in to indicate another addition to give you the full picture of what this woman is doing. She is causing these people to go astray, not only with sexual immorality, but by eating something. The Greek word is "esthio." This word means to consume food. Again it is here aorist tense, just like the word for fornication. That means at some particular point of eating a special kind of food. It is active voice, which means that this person chooses deliberately to eat this particular kind of food. It's infinitive to indicate to us that when they do this, it's the result of what this woman has been teaching them.

**Food Sacrificed to Idols**

What particular kind of food has she induced them to eat? Food which is described as "eidolothutos." This is the word for things sacrificed to idols. It's an adjective. This is, of course, part of what was incorporated in the ancient pagan systems of worship such as the Baal cult. Sacrifices were made to the material idol that was made of metal; stone; wood; or, whatever it was made of. Sacrifices were offered, of one kind or another, in the way of food before these idols. This was an act of worship, but it was an act of worship of the demon spirit that was the power behind that idol. This was an actual practice that was worshiping the demon behind it.

**Demon Worship**

The way you worshiped the demon when you sacrificed to him was that you ate part of the sacrifice. The priest brought the worshiper and the demon spirit together by himself eating part of the food. He ate part of the sacrifice, and the worshiper ate part of the sacrifice. In that way, he was joined to the demon spirit. Those who understood what was behind this practice, and those who were believers who were impressed and who were caught up in this, could not say, "I know that idol is a dumb idol. When I eat this steak, I eat it because it's good meat. I do not do it in any way that it connotes any respect or any recognition of this idol." But these people, when they did it, because they had been reared in this pagan climate, could not eat this food which had been once sacrificed to an idol without themselves being in awe of the spirit of the idol, which they were worshiping. So the eating of this food was characteristic of the worship of idols in the old world.

I have been in homes at Christmas time where people sat down to the meal on Christmas Eve, and in the middle of the table there was an empty plate. As the dinner was served, whatever you took of the food that you're eating, you were to take a little piece and put it out there in that plate. You know what it was put there for? In the ancient world, it was put there for the worship as an offering to the demon gods behind the idol. But of course, that doesn't sound very good today for those who call themselves Christians and who are celebrating Christmas. So I was told that this food was put there for the angels. And I'm sitting there and I'm watching people who are taking little bits of food and putting it out there in the middle of that table on that plate for the angels. I never did quite figure out why the angels needed that food since they don't eat, but I didn't want to raise any furor. I'm usually a very sweet sort of guy, and I go along with everything because I want to get along with people. So I always play ball. Here they are, putting their food out there for the angels.

However, I found it very hard. I did gag (not literally), so to speak, doing it myself, because I could not help thinking of the old ancient Babylonian mystery cults, and their offering of sacrifices to the idols in order to join the worshiper with the spirit of the demon god. And that is a typical example of the many practices we have today that Christians are doing that actually had the origin in some reality of the ancient pagan worship system.

In Thyatira, they were much closer to this system. This woman Jezebel was doing exactly that sort of thing. For all I know, she may have been the one who invented giving food to the angels when you celebrate the Saturnalia on December 25th, the old Roman orgy holiday. But in any case, this Thyatira Jezebel was leading church members into the same pagan Babylonian mystery practices as had the Old Testament Jezebel.

**The Roman Catholic Church**

When we start researching a little bit of history, we find some fascinating correlations between the Babylonian system and its mixture into Christianity as the result of the passage of the centuries and the rising authority and power of the hierarchy and the clergy of the Roman Catholic Church. All of this, of course, began with the man who was bishop of Rome. In various large metropolitan areas, there was one supreme ecclesiastical leader. He assumed the title of bishop. He was in authority over other ministers and over other religious leaders under him.

**Apostolic Succession – the Bishops of Rome**

After Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, the bishops of Rome gradually began claiming supreme authority over the whole church. Now they base this idea on the claim that Peter was the chief apostle; that he had been the bishop of Rome; and, that he had been the foremost interpreter of the teachings of Jesus Christ. So the bishops of Rome said, "Look, we are bishops of the city of Rome (this metropolitan complex). We are following in the footsteps of Peter, who was the chief of the apostles, and who at one time himself was here in Rome, and was the bishop of Rome." And they said, "Since that was true, we who our bishops today have inherited his authority and his power. This is where the idea of apostolic succession came into being.

The ancient Babylonian system had this method where one priest, by placing his hand on an initiate priest and going through a certain ceremony, supposedly conveyed to him the priestly powers that he possessed. In Christianity, gradually the Roman Church absorbed the same concept of apostolic succession with the idea that there are always apostles. Well, it is very clear from the Word of God that an apostle had to be somebody who face-to-face saw Jesus Christ after He was raised from the dead. There are church groups today who claim to have apostles. The Episcopalian church, for example, claims to have apostolic succession. Of course, the Roman Catholic Church does that too. But it's in Catholic groups, and it's in Protestant groups. They have the idea that they have had apostolic authority passed on to them from the first apostles, and that there are apostles today.

Well, they have to slither around the fact that when the early disciples said we have to get somebody to replace Judas, one of the requirements was that they had somebody who knew Jesus Christ after He was resurrected – who had seen Him in resurrection, so that he could witness to that fact. They had to pick only from among those who had actually seen Christ in resurrection. The apostle Paul eventually qualified for that. Though he did not see Christ in resurrection here on this earth, he did see Him in resurrection on the Damascus Road, and therefore was qualified to hold this particular testimony of an apostle.

However, the apostolic succession, of course, was a pagan fraud that was absorbed, and the bishops of Rome were the ones who wanted to claim this. We have actually no historical record of Peter ever being associated with Rome. Actually, there was not even a claim made that Peter was ever associated with Rome until the fourth century. Do you know why that was? By the fourth century, Christianity had become the official religion of the Roman Empire. It was no longer persecuted. It was now an advantage to be a Christian, and the bishops of Rome were now ready to begin building up their authority over all the other bishops. There is no sound historical evidence whatsoever that Peter was ever even in the city of Rome, let alone that he was the bishop of Rome. The claims, however, of the bishops of Rome, the supreme authority, were not even recognized until about the fifth century A.D. after the first council. They assumed, by this recognition, authority for appointing spiritual leaders in the church.

You have some Protestant denominations today where the congregation does not exercise the authority under the leading of God the Holy Spirit to select a spiritual leader in the form of a pastor-teacher for that congregation. Rather, there are authorities in the hierarchy above them. They must wait for that hierarchy of authority (usually called bishops) to tell a local congregation that, "You will have this man as your pastor this year."

**Pontifex Maximus**

This is the pagan practice of the Babylonian mystery cults of appointing spiritual leadership under the authority of what was the chief high priest. The chief high priest in the pagan system was called the Pontifex Maximus. You want to get acquainted with that term. That was the title which was given to the chief high priest of Nimrod's pagan Babylonian system.

**The Vicar of Christ**

The bishop of Rome, by the fifth century, claimed to be the Vicar of Christ. When you hear that word "Vicar," that means "representative." The bishop of Rome claimed to be the representative of Christ on earth, and therefore, he spoke with infallible communications from God. In time, the pope also claimed authority over temporal matters.

**Peter**

This claim to papal supremacy of the bishops of Rome was based in large part upon Matthew 16:18-19. Just in passing, we ought to look at that: "I say also unto you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give unto you keys to the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Here, Peter, under the guise of being the chief of the apostles, is claimed to have been invested with special authority over all the other apostles, and to have been the foundation (the cornerstone – the bedrock) upon which Jesus Christ was going to build His church – upon Peter. And his authority was symbolized in the keys of the kingdom which were given to him.

Today, on the coat of arms of the Pope of Rome, you will see a pair of keys. If you ever see the coat of arms, you will see two keys (usually they're crossed) symbolizing the keys of St. Peter.

The Matthew passage has a little play on words that does not show up in the English language. The play on words has to do between the name "Peter" and the word "rock." Without going into detail, I'll simply call your attention to the fact that the name "Peter" means "a little stone" or "a chip off of a larger rock." The word "rock" means "a massive stone" – a massive, immovable boulder, or a foundation stone. So on the one hand, you have the name "Peter," which means just a pebble that you'll throw around. And you have the word "rock," which is a massive stone that's a foundation type of stone that you do not move around. It's an immovable type of rock.

Look back in verse 16: "And Simon Peter answered and said, You are Christ, the Son of the living God." This is in response to the question of Jesus to His disciples, "Whom do you believe I am?" Peter spoke up and said, "You are the Christ. You are the one promised, the anointed one of the Old Testament to fulfill the Davidic Covenant, and the Son of the living God. Then, in verse 17, Jesus says, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjonah, for flesh and blood have not revealed that to you, but My Father who is in heaven." This is Jesus' way of saying, "You're absolutely right, Peter. And you didn't get this because somebody told it to you. You figured it out. You got this because God has revealed it to you. Now you understand who I really am."

Then Jesus goes on and makes this little play on words and says, "You are a little stone, but upon this rock." What rock? This rock of what Peter has just stated to be the grand truth of the ages – that Jesus Christ is the Christ, the Son of the living God – that He is the one who has been sent to fulfill all the promises of the Old Testament, and all the promises relative to a provision for human salvation.

So the Matthew passage refers to the sphere of Christian profession. When Peter is given keys here to the kingdom of heaven, these are keys relative to the opening of divine viewpoint enlightenment. These same keys are possessed by all the other apostles, and were in fact passed on to all the disciples. In Matthew 18:18, Jesus is speaking to the disciples as a whole. There He says, "Verily, I say unto you, whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." This is a reference again to locking and unlocking – the use of the keys. So here this was applied not just to this man, Peter, as the chief of the apostles, but to all the disciples as a whole – and, by implication, to us down to this day.

We may also add John 20:22-23 which say, "And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. Whosoever sins you remit shall be remitted unto them, and whosoever sins you retain, they are retained. Here again, He is speaking to the disciples as a whole. This is in reference to communication. You and I, this week, can meet a variety of people who are lost. They are doomed; they're without Christ; and, they're hopeless. You can look into the eyes of that person through the windows of the soul. Inside that body is the soul – a soul which is doomed and destined for hell. You have in your hand the key to open the door to eternal life. You can keep the key, and you can keep the door closed by not giving him the information. Or you can reach over and use the key and unlock the door through the communication of the gospel that enables that person to make the choice to pass on through. This, of course, is under the election and choice of God. The opening of the door to divine viewpoint and enlightenment is what is involved here.

You have this referred to in Acts 2:38-42. You have this in Acts 10:34-48. In Acts 2, Peter opens the door to the Jews; and, in Acts 10, Peter opens the door to the gentiles. He is using the keys of divine viewpoint enlightenment. Peter, whose name means "a small stone," has given this testimony about Jesus Christ, which is referred to by the Lord as "a massive rock." In other words, the Lord is referring to Himself – the testimony that He is the Christ, the Son of the living God. He says, "On that fact. I am going to build my church." The church, of course, was not known in the Old Testament. There's a totally different revelation. It's a totally different work of God. It was something brand new, and the apostles had to learn to adjust to the fact that God's dealings with Israel were temporarily being postponed while a new thing was coming forth – the church. This church was going to be built upon Jesus Christ.

Notice what Peter himself says in 1 Peter 2:4-8: "To whom (referring to Jesus Christ) coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, you also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in Scripture: 'Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone (a massive immovable stone), elect, precious: and he that believes on Him shall not be confounded. Unto you, therefore, who believe, He is precious: but unto them who are disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, even to them who stumble at the Word, being disobedient: whereunto they were appointed." So Peter is very clearly referring to Jesus Christ here as the stone upon which God is building the church – the stone who is the foundation of the church.

In 1 Corinthians 3:11, the apostle Paul says that quite specifically when he says, "For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." So the Matthew passage is referring to the fact that Jesus Christ is the Rock Foundation upon which the church is built, and Peter's confession concerning who Jesus Christ was, was the massive rock that Christ was referring to.

Now, someone may come up to you and say, "Hey, Jesus spoke in Aramaic. How can we have this distinction? In Aramaic, you don't have that kind of distinction. We're not sure that kind of a distinction existed there." Well, that is a nonsense argument because we have a Greek New Testament which was produced by God the Holy Spirit. It isn't an errant record. What is in the Greek testament is what God the Holy Spirit reveals to us was in the mind of Jesus Christ when he made the statement. I don't care whether He spoke in Hindustani, or in German, or whatever Jesus spoke in. That would not make any difference. The intention and the meaning of Christ is recorded in the Greek New Testament. So don't let somebody discourage you with that.

Well, now we have the keys. The bishops of Rome are trying to establish their authority and their power. So suddenly today we see that here on the coat of arms of the pope are the two keys. Where did this come from? Obviously, it did not come from Scripture. For the first four centuries, none of the bishop of Rome even turned to this passage and made this kind of a claim. This kind of a claim for the bishops of Rome of having keys of authority evolved after they saw that Christianity was now the in thing, and that it was the point of power and authority in the ancient world.

Well, it so happens that in the ancient world, all the pagans knew about a teaching set of keys. They were the keys of the god Janus and Sybil. This is the mother-and-child cult. And you will recognize that Janice is the two-faced god who looks forward and backwards, from which we get the name "January" for the first month of the year, looking forward and looking backwards. These two deities possess keys, and the ancient world constantly talked about the keys of Janus and Sybil. These are the keys which, in point of fact, were assumed by the pope when he took the title of Pontifex Maximus, because it was the Pontifex Maximus (the chief high priest of the pagan system) who had authority over the two keys. In the Pope's coat of arms, you see these two keys crossed. This symbol was used everywhere in the ancient world to refer to the keys of Janus and Sybil, which were possessed by the Pontifex Maximus as his supreme authority in the cult.

The bishop of Rome, as I said, never made any claim to such keys before the fifth century, sometime after 431, when the pagans began flooding into the religion of Christianity.

**The Keys of the Interpreter**

There is another interesting thing about the keys of Janus and Sybil. They were known as the keys of a man who was called "the interpreter" – the man who brought the secrets to the initiates who were coming into the Babylonian cults. The word for "interpreter" was pronounced "Peter." And through the ancient world there was reference to the keys of Peter, meaning the keys of "the interpreter." And this title was a ready-made means of associating the pope at Rome with keys of authority supposedly given to a man named Peter in the Bible. You talk about cleverness on the part of Satan – this is fantastic. This Peter (interpreter) claimed to possess the keys of Janus and Sybil, and he could interpret the mysteries of this cult. Those who are the adherents of the Babylonian cult called these "the key of Peter," or "the keys of the interpreter."

Furthermore, there's another interesting point. The ancient writers record for us that this Peter, or interpreter, was associated with the city of Rome. What could have been better? This was a Peter who was the interpreter of divine truth from the city of Rome. This is what the popes, after the middle of the fifth century, began claiming to possess. This Peter of Rome claimed that his keys would open passage to the invisible world of happiness, and the doctrine into the invisible world was contained, interestingly enough, in a book called The Book of Petroma. That is, of course, a play on the words "Peter" and "Rome," and it really means The Book of the Grand Interpreter of Rome.

So in the fifth century, when pagans were ready to come into Christianity, the papacy recognized that it could consolidate its claim to supreme authority, which the bishops of Rome had more and more, through these centuries, been trying to establish, and they could do it by getting the support of the pagans. What better way to secure the support of the pagans than by making Peter the chief of the apostles (though he was not that), and to make this Peter associated with the Peter of the ancient world, which meant "the interpreter," who held the keys of Janus and Sybil, and to make those the keys that Jesus Christ gave to Peter, the chief apostle, who was reportedly bishop of Rome, and who therefore was "the chief interpreter" of God's truth and God's viewpoint?

**The Origin of the Roman Catholic Church**

Well, the papacy made precisely that claim, and then it went one step more. The popes accepted the pagan Babylonian practices; rituals; and, customs into the religious system of Christianity. That is the origin of the priestly robes of Roman Catholicism. That is the origin of the religious festival. That is the origin of such non-biblical doctrines as the bloodless sacrifice of the mass; the concept of purgatory; and, so on. That is the origin of incense in worship. That is the origin of the tinkling of the bells in the worship service. That is the origin of the holy water; the candles; and, the images. The Pope of Rome in the fifth century assumed the title of Pontifex Maximus. The Pope of Rome claimed descent from Peter of Rome, who held the keys of interpretation. The Pope, as Pontifex Maximus, claimed exactly what the ancient pagan leader claimed to be the interpreter of the passage to the invisible world. When the pagans saw how ready the Pope (the Bishop of Rome) was to support their pagan concepts and ideas and practices, they readily supported his claims to absolute supremacy, because they saw that their ways were being incorporated into Christianity. The result was the modern day perversion that we know as the Roman Catholic Church.

This is a fantastic inter-relationship of what already existed with what they transformed into Christian titles. And we have to go into this further to show more of what these practices of the Babylonian system were, which was exemplified, for example, in the worship of Baal. This was incorporated into Christianity, and this is what the Thyatira Jezebel was promoting. She was promoting just exactly this kind of relationship to the ancient pagan beliefs, and bringing them into Christianity, and relating them to such things as Peter of Rome (the interpreter), and the Pontifex Maximus concept. You could see how many people, when she brought this up, would very innocently say, "Yeah, the bishop of Rome is the chief high priest now. He is sort of like the old Pontifex Maximus, isn't he?" And it was all very innocent. They did not grasp the fact that this Jezebel was bringing in the old worship of Baal all over again.

By the time the Roman Empire broke up and came to its end in 476 A.D., the Roman Catholic Church was in full operation and in full structure with its cardinal system, and the bishop of Rome was recognized as the Pope (as the supreme pontiff of the church) bearing the title of Pontifex Maximus, and fully capable of moving in and enforcing all decrees, both spiritual and temporal. The Pope now was not to be stopped. There's only one thing that stopped him, and that is that the barbarians came in, and they tore apart the Roman Empire. They swooped in from across the Rhine, and they swooped in from the outer perimeters of the Roman Empire. These Germanic tribes came in, and they brought Rome to its end.

However, the result of that was breaking up the Roman Empire into nations. That's what you have today. We have national entities. Here again the hand of God, as Christianity was perverted into Roman Catholicism, and was now a dominant force, there was only one way again to stop evil from being propagated in a religious system, and that was to have national groups, so that nations could restrain evil within their own territory. This is exactly what happened. The result of that breakup of the Roman Empire was providential. And it was a provision that God made so that there was enlightenment of divine truth.

As we will see here in our passage in Revelation, there were still people who were true to God. There were still people in all these ages who were faithful to the truth of God. And they were being persecuted now by the dominant Pontifex Maximus and his Roman Catholic system. What this woman in Thyatira was doing was saying, "Let's bring the pagans in. Let's not fight over words. Let's be understanding. Let's adjust to things." And in the process of that, she was willing to teach them to participate in sexual immorality, because the pagans understood that that was the way to relate yourself to your God – to participate in eating of meat offered to an idol, because they understood that this is the way you worship your God. She said, "All they had to do was to give a different meaning to it." They understood what it was to take that little round wafer that represented the sun, and to eat it. There was one thing the pagans never did, though, with that wafer. They never said it was the real body of their God. As Cicero, the great Roman Latin writer said, "It is absolutely ridiculous to think about anybody eating his god."

Yet, the Roman Catholic system, under the Pontifex Maximus idea, conveyed that little around wafer, through the doctrine of transubstantiation, into the actual body of Christ, so that they could actually eat Him. Under the Baal worship, what did a person do when he sacrificed to his god? If you just performed the sacrifice of the mass, it's the wine and the bread. What do you do at a sacrifice? You relate yourself to your God by eating it: "Cahna," and the name "Baal." The word "Cahna" means "human flesh eater." And you see the name of Baal in reference to the practice of worship of the devotee eating part of the sacrifice. He was worshiping Baal as "Cahna Baal". And, of course, you can see that from that we have gotten our modern word "cannibal." "Cahna Baal" is one of the ancient names of Baal where the person who is making a sacrifice eats part of the sacrifice. The unholy mass was directly related to this system of eating flesh, but now they converted it into the body of Jesus Christ in the form of that wafer. The pagans never did that. That was a Roman Catholic invention – of turning wine into the very blood of Christ, so they could drink His wine and eat His flesh, and thus worship "Cahna Baal" in the form that he was worshiped in the ancient world, where they had human sacrifices to Baal, and then ate flesh of those whom they were sacrificing.

That's fascinating, isn't it? And in Thyatira, this woman was saying, "Let's not be so narrow minded. Let's give a little, and let's relate ourselves to the pagan world about us so that we can reach them for God."

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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