

# The Two Babylons Chapter VII. The Two Developments Historically and Prophetically Considered



Continued from [Chapter VI. Religious Orders. Section II – Priests, Monks, and Nuns](#)

Hitherto we have considered the history of the Two Babylons chiefly in detail. Now we are to view them as organised systems. The idolatrous system of the ancient Babylon assumed different phases in different periods of its history. In the prophetic description of the modern Babylon, there is evidently also a development of different powers at different times. Do these two developments bear any typical relation to each other? Yes, they do. When we bring the religious history of the ancient Babylonian Paganism to bear on the prophetic symbols that shadow forth the organised working of idolatry in Rome, it will be found that it casts as much light on this view of the subject as on that which has hitherto engaged our attention. The powers of iniquity at work in the modern Babylon are specifically described in chapters 12 and 13 of the Revelation; and they are as follows:—I. The Great Red Dragon; II. The Beast that comes up out of the sea; III. The Beast that ascendeth out of the earth; and IV. The Image of the Beast. In all these respects it will be found, on inquiry, that, in regard to succession and order of development, the Paganism of the Old Testament Babylon was the exact type of the Paganism of the new.

## **Section 1 – The Great Red Dragon**

This formidable enemy of the truth is particularly described in Revelation 12:3—

**“And there appeared another wonder in heaven, a great red dragon.”**

It is admitted on all hands that this is the first grand enemy that in Gospel times assaulted the Christian Church. If the terms in which it is described, and the deeds attributed to it, are considered, it will be found that there is a great analogy between it and the first enemy of all, that appeared against the ancient Church of God soon after the Flood. The term dragon,

according to the associations currently connected with it, is somewhat apt to mislead the reader, by recalling to his mind the fabulous dragons of the Dark Ages, equipped with wings. At the time this Divine description was given, the term dragon had no such meaning among either profane or sacred writers. "The dragon of the Greeks," says Pausanias, "was only a large snake"; and the context shows that this is the very case here; for what in the third verse is called a "dragon," in the fourteenth is simply described as a "serpent." Then the word rendered "Red" properly means "Fiery"; so that the "Red Dragon" signifies the "Fiery Serpent" or "Serpent of Fire." Exactly so does it appear to have been in the first form of idolatry, that, under the patronage of Nimrod, appeared in the ancient world. The "Serpent of Fire" in the plains of Shinar seems to have been the grand object of worship. There is the strongest evidence that apostacy among the sons of Noah began in fire-worship, and that in connection with the symbol of the serpent.

We have seen already, on different occasions, that fire was worshipped as the enlightener and the purifier. Now, it was thus at the very beginning; for Nimrod is singled out by the voice of antiquity as *commencing* this fire-worship. The identity of Nimrod and Ninus has already been proved; and under the name of Ninus, also, he is represented as originating the same practice. In a fragment of Apollodorus it is said that "Ninus taught the Assyrians to worship fire." The sun, as the great source of light and heat, was worshipped under the name of Baal. Now, the fact that the sun, under that name, was worshipped in the earliest ages of the world, shows the audacious character of these first beginnings of apostacy. Men have spoken as if the worship of the sun and of the heavenly bodies was a very excusable thing, into which the human race might very readily and very innocently fall. But how stands the fact? According to the primitive language of mankind, the sun was called "Shemesh"—that is, "the Servant"—that name, no doubt, being divinely given, to keep the world in mind of the great truth that, however glorious was the orb of day, it was, after all, the appointed *Minister* of the bounty of the great unseen Creator to His creatures upon earth. Men knew this, and yet with the full knowledge of it, they put the servant in the place of the Master; and called the sun Baal—that is, the Lord—and worshipped him accordingly. What a meaning, then, in the saying of Paul, that,

***"when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God";***

but

***"changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is God over all, blessed for ever."***

The beginning, then, of sun-worship, and of the worship of the host of heaven, was a sin against the light—a presumptuous, heaven-daring sin. As the sun in the heavens was the great object of worship, so *fire* was worshipped as its earthly representative. To this primeval fire-worship Vitruvius alludes when he says that "men were first formed into states and communities by meeting around fires." And this is exactly in conformity with what we have

already seen in regard to Phoroneus, whom we have identified with Nimrod, that while he was said to be the “inventor of fire,” he was also regarded as the first that “gathered mankind into communities.”

