

BATTLING BABYLONS

*The Vision Of "The Great Prostitute"
And Its Startling Implications*

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Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.
Psalm 119.105

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This work is dedicated to
the Lord Jesus Christ
for the advancement of His kingdom,
and in gratitude to my mother,
Verna Mae Graciano,
who has always loved people
more than things.

“This calls for a mind with wisdom.”
Rev 17.09

SYNOPSIS

The book of Revelation predicts a still future judgment of “the Great Prostitute/Mystery Babylon the Great.” John’s vision of this judgment provides us with startling insight into coming sociopolitical developments in the Mediterranean world. More importantly, this vision warns God’s people away from the End-Time worship of *Mammon* (money deified). The worship of Mammon will reach a new zenith in the ultimate commercialism of human trafficking, a plague already spreading its ugly tentacles around our globe. While the full manifestation of the Great Prostitute is yet future, the time for repentance is already upon us. We must turn away from living in the spirit of Mystery Babylon, and rediscover a Jesus-quality love.

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THE HONEYTRAP

“In espionage, a honeypot or honeytrap is a trap set to capture, kill or compromise an enemy agent using sex as the lure.... The most common employment of this technique is by women, either female intelligence agents or ... prostitutes. Some intelligence agencies, particularly in the Soviet bloc, are alleged to have specially cultivated agents for this purpose.”¹

Just as human agencies have trained operatives for allurement and entrapment, so has Satan. For millennia, the kingdom of darkness has cultivated one agent in particular — a prostitute — by which Satan hopes to compromise and (if it were possible) kill the Church of these last days. The apostle John saw this Satanic agent, this “Great Prostitute,” in a vision recorded in the book of Revelation, chapters 17.01 to 19.04.² John saw the prostitute sitting drunkenly on a scarlet beast, and noticed this name tattooed on her forehead:

Mystery
Babylon the Great
The Mother of Prostitutes
And of The Abominations of the Earth.

The following pages provide an analysis of John’s vision of this Mother of Prostitutes called “Mystery Babylon the Great.” As we shall see, the vision about her reveals a network of economic corruption, sheds light upon the career of the Antichrist, and — most importantly — warns us away from the Great Prostitute’s charms.

THE VISION (REVELATION 17.01-19.04)

An angel took John to a desert, specifically to show him “the judgment of the Great Prostitute.” Arriving in that desolate place, John saw a scarlet beast with seven heads and ten horns, and sitting upon the beast the scarlet woman, the Great Prostitute, named Mystery Babylon the Great. John was shocked to see that the woman “was drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus.” The angel then gave John further information about the woman and the beast, concluding with the disclosure that “the beast and the ten horns you saw will hate the prostitute. They will bring her to ruin ... and burn her with fire.”

John saw another angel descend from heaven, announcing the fall of Babylon the Great, and heard another heavenly voice calling God’s people to “come out of her” so as not to share in her sins nor in her judgment. Then John saw the kings who shared in the Great Prostitute’s luxuries, and the merchants who profited by her, mourning and crying out because “in an hour” she had become like the desert waste where John and his angelic companion stood.³ Someone shouted, “Rejoice over her, O heaven! Rejoice, saints and apostles and prophets! God has judged her for the way she treated you.” Then a mighty angel threw a boulder into the sea to illustrate Babylon [the Great’s] complete disappearance, explaining

1 <http://www.answers.com/topic/honeypot-espionage>.

2 When abbreviating Bible book names for references, I use the 3-letter system used by *BibleWorks*, without a period following (e.g., Revelation = Rev). I separate chapter and verse references with a period, rather than the traditional colon, and I use a zero place-holder with single-digit references for the sake of computer sorting. The traditional Rev. 17:1 thus becomes Rev 17.01. Unless otherwise stated, Scripture quotations are from the NIV.

3 Compare the Grk *eremos* (desert) of Rev 17.03 and *eremō* (lay waste) in Rev 18.19.

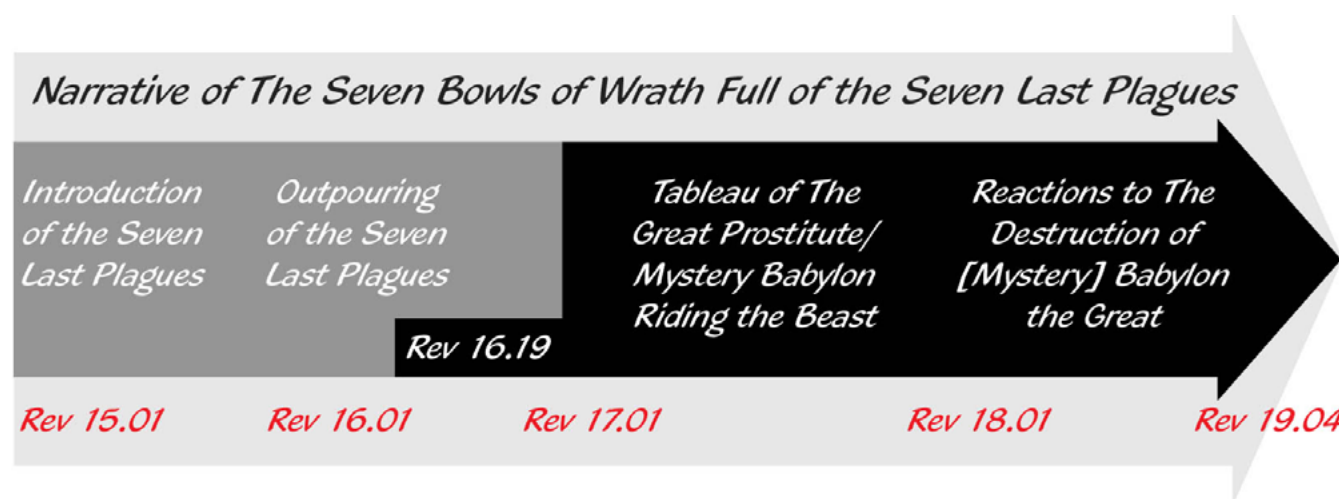
that, “in her was found the blood of the prophets and the saints and of all who have been killed on the earth.”

Finally, John heard a great multitude in heaven rejoicing that God had “condemned the Great Prostitute” and “avenged on her the blood of his servants.”

Sorting out this vision is not difficult, but it begins with determining the Great Prostitute’s identity.

THE PROSTITUTE’S IDENTITY

To identify the Great Prostitute and correctly interpret the vision about her, we must first recognize that chapters 17 and 18 of Revelation are part of a single thematic unit within the narrative of the book. This topical unit begins at 17.01 and ends at 19.04, and is in turn part of the larger narrative about *The Seven Bowls of Wrath Full of the Seven Last Plagues* (see diagram below). It’s important to recognize that the one vision of “The Great Prostitute/Mystery Babylon the Great” spans multiple chapters. I emphasize this because many interpreters have erroneously seen two different Babylons in Rev 17 and 18, saying that chapter 17 depicts a religious entity while chapter 18 describes a city. However, we must not let our modern chapter divisions — nor our theological presuppositions — mislead us into thinking that there is a stronger narrative transition between Rev 17 and 18 than actually exists.



It’s true that the scene can change suddenly in the book of Revelation. The book describes one dramatic vision after another! However, the rapid scene changes make it all the more necessary that we carefully analyze the overall thematic flow of the narrative. Indeed, the scene *does* change slightly at Rev 18.01, but let’s back up and get the whole picture.

The Revelation first introduced the topic of “Babylon the Great” to John and his readers in a brief, angelic declaration about Babylon’s fall:

Rev 14.08 And another angel, a second one, followed, saying, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality.” (NASB)

Several questions would have leapt to John's mind when he heard this:

1. What does the angel mean by "Babylon the Great"? (Mesopotamian Babylon was reduced to a poor village in John's time.)
2. Why is "Babylon the Great" characterized as having caused nations to drink the "wine of ... her immorality"?
3. In what sense and by what agency has "Babylon the Great" fallen?

With John's curiosity thus aroused, the continuing revelation proceeded to address other issues, and launched into the vision of *The Seven Bowls of Wrath Full of the Seven Last Plagues*. Then, the revelation returned — in the context of the outpouring of the seventh bowl — to the topic of Babylon the Great with another single-sentence "teaser":

Rev 16.19 ... And Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath. (NASB)

By this point in the progressive unfolding of the revelation, John must have become quite anxious to understand the bits of the vision about "Babylon the Great," this entity that had so severely incurred God's wrath. So at last, one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to John, "Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits on many waters" (Rev 17.01).

The identification of the angel at the beginning of Rev 17 as "one of the seven ... who had the seven bowls" underscores the fact that what follows is an amplification of something already mentioned in connection with the bowl judgments. As John soon discovered, what the angel would show him was a much fuller picture of the particular occurrence that followed the outpouring of the seventh bowl (Rev 16.17) and had so peaked John's interest. The seventh outpouring had brought:

1. a loud voice,
2. lightning,
3. thunder,
4. an unprecedented earthquake,
5. the splitting into three of the great city [Jerusalem],
6. the collapse of Gentile cities,
7. God's remembrance of and fury upon Babylon the Great,
8. sinking of islands,
9. disappearance of mountains, and
10. a rain of talent-sized hailstones (Rev 16.17-21).

Additional revelation would now amplify number seven for John, *God's remembrance of Babylon the Great*.

The angel introduced this supplementary vision as pertaining to "the Great Prostitute." The Greek word *pornee* (prostitute) in Rev 17.01 would have reminded John of the word *pornea* (immorality) that he'd already heard in connection with Babylon the Great — this entity who had forced the nations to drink the wine of her *pornea* (Rev 14.08). Sure enough, the angel explained that the kings of the earth committed immorality (or adultery) with this "Great Prostitute," and were likewise intoxicated with the wine of her *pornea* (Rev 17.02). John must have expected that his curiosity about the revelation's immoral "Babylon the

Great” would now be addressed, and he was not disappointed. Having been carried away by the angel into a desert he saw the Great Prostitute, tattooed with the title: “Mystery Babylon the Great, The Mother of Prostitutes ...” (Rev 17.05).

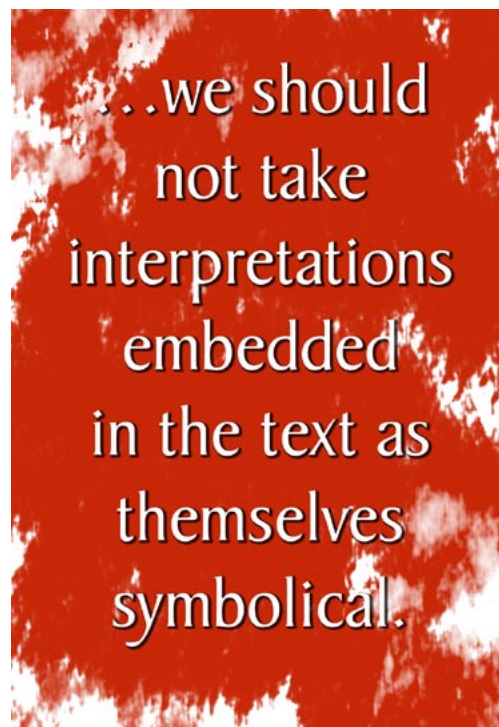
We see, then, that the thematic flow begins with the first “teaser” statement about Babylon the Great in Rev 14.08, continues through the second “teaser” in the context of the final bowl judgment in Rev 16.19, and finally culminates in the lengthy vision about “The Great Prostitute/Mystery Babylon the Great” in Rev 17.01 to 19.04.⁴ The specific topic announced in the first verse of chapter 17, namely, “*the judgment of the Great Prostitute*,” is:

1. logistically described near the end of Rev 17 (v. 16),
2. mourned through most of Rev 18,
3. poetically described near the end of chapter 18 (v. 21),
4. and finally rejoiced over in heaven in Rev 19.01-04:

Rev 19.01 After this I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting: “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for true and just are his judgments. *He has condemned [judged, NASB] the great prostitute who corrupted the earth by her adulteries. He has avenged on her the blood of his servants.*” (NIV)

We see that the “Great Prostitute” introduced in Rev 17.01 is mentioned a final time at the end of the vision about her in Rev 19.02. Clearly, no change of topic occurs between Rev 17 and 18. Both chapters are about “Babylon the Great” (17.05; 18.02), with whom “the kings of the earth committed adultery” (17.02; 18.03), and who is finally “consumed by fire” (17.16; 18.08). Both chapters are about the same entity “drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus” (17.06; 18.24). There is a slight change of scene between Rev 17 and 18 (18.01), but this consists only of another angel entering the picture to make loud proclamation about the continuing topic of Babylon’s fall (echoing Rev 14.08). Yet another voice joins the dirge in Rev 18.04, but this no more signals a change of topic than does the appearance of the angel in 18.01. The vision of The Great Prostitute, given to us in Rev 17.01 to 19.04, is a unified whole and describes the judgment of *a single entity*.

We need mention only one more thing before proceeding with our identification of “The Great Prostitute/Mystery Babylon the Great”. This second item is a principle of hermeneutics so easily overlooked that even great scholars have stumbled over it. The principle is this: **we should not take interpretations embedded in the text as themselves symbolical**. As we interpret passages in the Revelation, and particularly as we interpret this text about “The Great Prostitute/Mystery Babylon the Great,” *we must carefully distinguish between vision and interpretation* within the narrative. The vision may be highly symbolical or metaphorical; the interpretation — when given by an



⁴ The Beast is similarly introduced in the Revelation with a brief mention in Rev 11.07 before being treated at length in Rev 13-20.

inspired narrator within the text — will be literal.

Having noted these caveats, let's identify this woman "clothed in purple and scarlet."

Mystery Babylon Rather Than Literal Babylon

"Upon her forehead a name was written, a mystery, 'BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.'" (Rev 17.05, NASB). For now, we shall concern ourselves only with the first half of her name, "BABYLON THE GREAT," or as the NIV puts it, "MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT." In the Greek text, the word *mystery* either stands in apposition to the preceding noun, *name*, or complements the following proper noun, *Babylon*. This allows for two ways to read the verse:

...upon her forehead a name was written, a mystery, "BABYLON THE GREAT..." (NASB, cf. NLT)

OR

This title was written on her forehead: "MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT" (NIV, cf. ASV, KJV)

Either John describes her name *as* mysterious, or the first part of the name itself *is* the word *Mystery*. As A. T. Robertson explains, "in either case the meaning is the same, that the name Babylon is to be interpreted mystically or spiritually..."⁵ (Such a mystical interpretation of a city's name is likewise indicated for Jerusalem in Rev 11.08.) The first thing we learn, then, about the identity of this Great Prostitute is that she is *not* the famous Babylon in Mesopotamia once ruled by Nebuchadnezzar. If that were the case, she would be called "Babylon the Great" throughout the Revelation *with no mention of mystery*. Rather, this Great Prostitute is a different entity, but mystically called Babylon because she is endued with the same idolatrous and avaricious spirit of Nebuchadnezzar's ancient city on the Euphrates.

The Angel's Interpretation

Who or what is she then? Here we must embrace the literal interpretation given in the text by John's angelic guide. In Rev 17.18, the angel says, "the woman whom you saw is the great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth." This statement presents no new metaphor or symbol, but provides the interpretation of the symbolic woman already seen in the vision. The text is straightforward: the immoral woman is *a city*. This fact is hammered home in chapter 18:

Rev 18.10 ... "Woe! Woe, O great *city*, O Babylon, *city* of power! In one hour your doom has come!"

Rev 18.16 ... "Woe! Woe, O great *city*, dressed in fine linen, purple and scarlet, and glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls!"

5 Robertson, Vol. VI, p. 430. James Moffatt, in *The Expositor's Greek Testament* (Vol. 5, p. 452), writes "Roman *filles de joie* wore a label with their names thus (Juv. vi. 123). *μυστήριον* (which hardly belongs to the title itself) indicates that the name is to be taken *πνευματικῶς*" (xi.8), not literally; 'a name written which is a symbol,' or a mysteriously significant title."

Rev 18.18 ... ‘Was there ever a *city* like this great *city*?’

Rev 18.19 ... “Woe! Woe, O great *city*, where all who had ships on the sea became rich through her wealth! In one hour she has been brought to ruin!

Rev 18.21 ... “With such violence the great *city* of Babylon will be thrown down, never to be found again.

The woman *is a city*, and we must not lose sight of this simple truth. Mystery Babylon the Great, is *not* a country. If an author or preacher says that the United States or any other *nation* is the great harlot of Rev 17, don’t believe it, because though she resides within and even rules her own country and others, the woman is a *city*.

Nor should we think that the Great Prostitute is a religion or an ecclesiastical body, in spite of the giants of the faith who have called her such. Martin Luther and the Protestant reformers could not resist interpreting Revelation’s “whore of Babylon” as the Roman Catholic Church, but this was a rash interpretation. Regrettably, the *Scofield Reference Bible* has helped keep alive the reformers’ biased exegesis of the Great Prostitute vision.⁶ In our time, some have added much speculation to this ecclesiastical interpretation and now predict a coming syncretistic religion that absorbs or is ruled by Roman Catholicism. For example, Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum writes, “Babylon the Harlot represents the one-world religious system that rules the religious affairs during the first half of the tribulation. She rules over the nations of the world (the many waters) fully controlling the religious affairs and has the reluctant support of the government.”⁷

Fruchtenbaum understands correctly that the Great Prostitute exercises authority over the nations (Rev 17.01,15), but regarding her religious identity let us examine the text again without presuppositions: *is there anything in Rev 17.01-19.04 that indicates an ecclesiastical body?* A. R. Fausset, in his commentary *The Revelation Of St. John The Divine*, echoes many others who say Yes. He focuses upon the clothing of the Prostitute:

[Rev 17, verse] 4. The color scarlet, it is remarkable, is that reserved for popes and cardinals....compare *Roman Ceremonial* [3.5.5].... In it are enumerated five different articles of dress of *scarlet* color. A vest is mentioned studded with *pearls*. The Pope’s miter is of *gold* and *precious stones*. These are the very characteristics outwardly which Revelation thrice assigns to the harlot or Babylon. [Italics are original.]⁸

Let us proceed carefully here. The garments and accessories of the Great Prostitute *could* allude to religious vestments. Long before the advent of Roman Catholicism, the Israelite priesthood made extensive use of gold, purple and scarlet (Exo 28.05,06,08,15,33). Furthermore, the Prostitute *does* have a religious dimension to her personality, as we shall see. However, the Prostitute’s garments and their colors can also allude simply to *sin* (Isa 1.18), or *seduction* (1Ti 2.09), or *wealth* (Luk 16.19) or *royalty* (Est 08.15; Mat 27.27-29). Indeed, the Great Prostitute mirrors *Jerusalem* who, in her days of spiritual adultery, wore the same sort of thing. Jeremiah reproved Jerusalem saying, “What are you doing, O devastated one? Why dress yourself in scarlet and put on jewels of gold? Why shade your eyes with paint? You adorn yourself in vain. Your lovers despise you...” (Jer 04.30).⁹

6 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whore_of_Babylon.

7 Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah: A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events*, p. 161.

8 Jamieson, Fausset and Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*.

9 Cf. the seduction of Judah in *The Testaments Of The Twelve Patriarchs* (written c. 120 BC): “13.4 ... he showed me a boundless store of gold in his daughter’s behalf; for he was a king. 5 And he adorned her with gold and pearls, and caused her to pour out wine for us at the feast with the beauty of women. 6 And the wine turned aside my eyes, and pleasure

When we realize, then, that the Great Prostitute's adornment presents us with an array of different possible connotations, we are forced to take the whole picture into account before hastily adopting the ecclesiastical interpretation. We must stop and ask ourselves again, "Is there anything about temples, priests, worship, or ritual in the whole tableau of Rev 17 or the pronouncement of woe in Rev 18?" The answer is, "Not a word!"

No. In Revelation 17.04 and 18.16, John does not describe the garments of the Catholic clergy anymore than he does those of the Levitical priesthood. Rather, he simply presents the Great Prostitute as a *wealthy, seductive* and *royal city*.

"Wait!" some will say, "the Great Prostitute is an adulteress (Rev 17.02), and adultery in the Bible speaks of religious idolatry — and what current religion is more idolatrous than Roman Catholicism?" Ah, truly, the Great Prostitute is guilty of spiritual adultery and idolatry, but not all idolatries in the Bible occur in connection with an organized religion or ecclesiastical system. For example, James wrote to Christians who had committed spiritual adultery, but whose idolatry had nothing to do with religious rituals. They had simply fallen into materialism and hedonism (Jam 4.01-04). The adultery of the Great Prostitute will take this same *materialistic* form, as shown in the poetic parallelism of Rev 18.03:

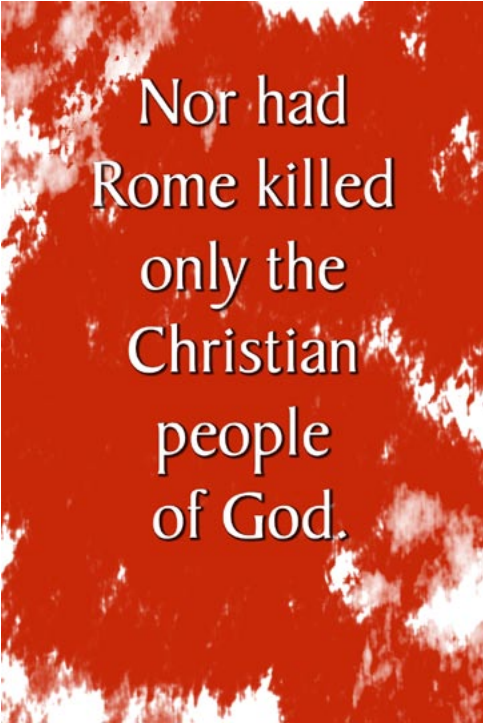
The kings of the earth committed adultery with her,
and the merchants of the earth grew rich
from her excessive luxuries.

The adultery of the Prostitute and her lovers has to do with *pursuing riches*, not with performing rituals. The immorality of the Great Prostitute involves *indulging in excessive luxuries*. Her idolatry and spiritual adultery are not ecclesiastical but commercial. Mystery Babylon the Great is not a religious system, but a *city who rules the nations economically*.¹⁰

blinded my heart. 7 And I became enamored of and I lay with her, and transgressed the commandment of the Lord and the commandment of my fathers, and I took her to wife."

- 10 *Metonymy* is a figure of speech in which one noun is used to signify another thing associated with it. By this figure of speech, an author can use the word *city*, or the name of a city, to mean its inhabitants (e.g., Isa 14.31; Jer 04.29; Mat 02.03; 23.37). So, by "great city" (Rev 17.18) the angel can mean its inhabitants,





Nor had
Rome killed
only the
Christian
people
of God.

Nor is Mystery Babylon a political system. As an influential city, she participates in and energizes her local religion and government, but the sins she commits she commits as a city and the destruction that befalls her is the destruction of a literal city.

Which city is she? As we've already observed, the angel said to John, "the woman whom you saw **is the great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth.**" Again observe: these words explain the symbol of the Great Prostitute; they do not present a new mystery. Furthermore, let us note that the angel speaks emphatically in the present tense (the Greek text uses a present participle). "The Great Prostitute/Mystery Babylon the Great" is not a city that *once reigned* over the kings of the earth. Mesopotamian Babylon *once reigned* over the kings of the Middle East, but in John's day, its greatness lay in ruins.¹¹ Nor is "Mystery Babylon the Great" a city that would *someday in the future* — from John's perspective — reign over the kings of the earth.¹² She is not, for example, New York, because New York did

not exist in John's time, though it is the city that economically sways so many nations today. Rather, "The Great Prostitute/Mystery Babylon the Great" is the city that wielded imperial sovereignty over the kings of the earth *when John received this Revelation*. The Lord knew, and the angel knew, that given this information, John could only draw one conclusion as to the identity of the Great Prostitute. In fact, given the description in Rev 17.18, any of John's first readers in Asia Minor would have considered the city's identity as obvious as Caesar's image on the local coinage; she was Rome! For Jesus and his angel to secretly mean any other city would have been *to knowingly deceive John and his first-century readers*.¹³

When John received the Revelation, he was at the very time a "fellow partaker in the tribulation ... and perseverance which are in Jesus, ... on the island called Patmos, because of the word of God and *the testimony of Jesus*" (Rev 01.09, NASB). John and the

and at least has them in view as the perpetrators of her sins. However, the destruction of the city described in Rev 18 indicates the physical environs *now devoid of inhabitants* (Rev 18.21-23). Also by metonymy, a *capital* city can signify its government or its nation (Isa 08.04; Luk 02.38). What is unprecedented in Scripture, as far as I can discover, is the use of *city* to mean *the city's religion*. To represent a religion by metonymy, we would expect the image of a priest or a temple, not a city. Unless we can prove that the Great Prostitute is a priestess, we must abandon the theory that the city, Mystery Babylon, represents her local ecclesiastical system in any direct way.

- 11 While many Jews still lived in its vicinity, this Babylon of the East slowly declined to become nearly deserted by the time of Marcus Aurelius. See Newton, Benjamin Wills; *Babylon: Its Future History and Doom*, ch. 2 "Brief History of the gradual Declension of Babylon."
- 12 Outstanding eschatology teacher, David Pawson, has missed the force of the Greek present tense here when he interprets the city "as a new metropolis rising to dominate others during the 'end-time'" and says "... it would appear to be a fresh creation of man rather than the re-establishment of a former city (whether ancient Babylon or Rome)." See his excellent book, *When Jesus Returns*, p. 149.
- 13 The Revelation's first readers were not encouraged to look to the distant future for the book's significance. Rather, the angel said, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is near" (Rev 22.10). Granted that much of the book still awaits fulfillment, nevertheless, when the Revelation presented entities as *presently existing*, John and his congregations knew to interpret those entities in their first-century cultural and political context.

Christians in Asia Minor currently suffered under an imperially sanctioned persecution emanating from Rome, the city that was “drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore *testimony to Jesus*” (17.06). It is Rome upon whom both “apostles and prophets” shall be avenged (Rev 18.20), for in that city they crucified Peter and beheaded Paul. Rome! “In her was found the blood of prophets and of the saints” (Rev 18.24), and not just the blood of those slain *in her*, but “of all who have been killed on the earth.”¹⁴ Nor had Rome killed only the *Christian* people of God. In spite of her decades of accommodating the Jews and their peculiar religion, it was Rome who finally bathed Jerusalem in blood and plowed her under in destruction.

Speaking of Jerusalem, consider Matthew 23.34-37 and Luke 11.49-51:

‘I will send [Israel] prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and others they will persecute.’ Therefore this generation will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world...

In this text, Jesus assigned the bloodguilt for the killing of “all the prophets” to the Pharisees and the city of Jerusalem, and did so in language very similar to that of Revelation 17.06 and 18.20,24. On the basis of this similarity, some interpreters have pointed to these texts and identified “The Great Prostitute/Mystery Babylon the Great” with *Jerusalem*. However, while Jerusalem had indeed persecuted and killed saints, prophets and apostles, she had already been judged for her crimes by the time John received the Revelation. The Romans had already inflicted horrifying atrocities and total destruction upon Jerusalem in the siege of AD 70.¹⁵ In contrast, Mystery Babylon the Great is a city whose final and irrevocable demise was still ahead from John’s perspective. Furthermore, while The Great Prostitute is to be utterly destroyed, *never to be found again* (Rev 18.21), the prophets have predicted repeatedly and clearly that Jerusalem’s final destiny is exaltation *not oblivion* (Isa 02.02-03; Joe 3.17-20; Mic 4.01-02, etc.). While Jerusalem and Mystery Babylon the Great both incurred guilt for killing the saints, they were and are two different cities with opposite destinies.

John’s Perspective

For John, the currently ruling city and the active source of persecution was none other than Rome. Nevertheless, John’s angelic interpreter made doubly certain that readers then and now would make the connection between the Great Prostitute and the imperial city. Having refocused



14 This characterization was certainly true of Rome historically, for from the city of the Caesars went out the permissions and edicts of persecution into all the empire, but I fear this description of Rome as a persecutor of the saints may have a future fulfillment as well.

15 A minority of scholars propose that the Revelation was written earlier, during the Neronian persecution, but the prevailing view has always been that John received the Revelation sometime between AD 90 and 100.

John's attention by saying, "This calls for a mind with wisdom," the angel interpreted the seven heads of the Beast as "seven mountains on which the woman sits" (Rev 17.09, NASB). By "mountains" the angel meant physical heights like Mount Zion (Grk *oros*, Rev 14.01). In other words, the Great Prostitute sits on mountains that we in the Pacific Northwest would call *hills*, as the NIV and NLT suitably render the word. Rome, of course, is known to this day as "the city on seven hills," a nickname she has enjoyed from antiquity. As the occasionally *correct* Alexander Hislop has written,

"No other city in the world has ever been celebrated, as the city of Rome has, for its situation on seven hills. Pagan poets and orators, who had not thought of elucidating prophecy, have alike characterised it as 'the seven hilled city.'" Thus Virgil refers to it: "Rome has both become the most beautiful (city) in the world, and alone has surrounded for herself seven heights with a wall." Propertius, in the same strain, speaks of it (only adding another trait, which completes the Apocalyptic picture) as "The lofty city on seven hills, which governs the whole world." Its "governing the whole world" is just the counterpart of the Divine statement—"which reigneth over the kings of the earth" (Rev 17.18). To call Rome the city "of the seven hills" was by its citizens held to be as descriptive as to call it by its own proper name. Hence Horace speaks of it by reference to its seven hills alone, when he addresses, "The gods who have set their affections on the seven hills." Martial, in like manner, speaks of "The seven dominating mountains."¹⁶

As the city of Rome has expanded her perimeter over the centuries, authorities have argued about just which elevations we should count among the seven hills. In spite of this debate, however, people of John's day would have instantly recognized any mention of "a city on seven hills" as a reference to the imperial capital. On coins minted in AD 71, the goddess Roma was even depicted reclining on the seven hills (see next page).

A number of scholars have independently recognized a connection between the description in Rev 17.09 of the whore seated on seven mountains and a particular sestertius.... The obverse depicts a realistic portrait of the emperor... Vespasian.... The reverse depicts the goddess Roma in military dress ... sitting on Rome's Seven Hills with a parazonium (small sword) in her left hand resting on her left knee, a symbol of the military might of Rome.... There are two other figures on the reverse. The anthropomorphic figure of the river god Tiber reclines against the Seven Hills at the right (the right foot of the goddess extends toward him, apparently touching him). A group consisting of a miniature she-wolf with the twins Romulus and Remus suckling is located on the lower left.¹⁷

Students of this coin believe that the image of Roma resting on the seven hills is a copy or adaptation from an earlier artwork "which may have been a marble or bronze relief, ... dominated by the seated figure of Dea Roma, the goddess who personified Rome for the Greek world."¹⁸ The point is that by John's time the idea of Rome as the city on seven hills had long been deeply embedded in the Roman culture and in the popular thinking of the empire.

Admittedly, though, other cities have also been associated with seven hills, most notably Jerusalem. This more obscure association motivated the late Ernest L. Martin also to argue for *Jerusalem* as the identity of Mystery Babylon the Great.¹⁹ However, any first-century

¹⁶ Hislop, p 2. I have personally verified all of Hislop's citations used in this work.

¹⁷ Aune; *Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 52C: Revelation 17-22*.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Martin wrote:

But strange as it may seem, the City of Jerusalem as it existed in the time of Christ Jesus was also reckoned to be the "City of Seven Hills." This fact was well recognized in Jewish circles. In the *Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer*, an eighth century midrashic narrative (section 10), the writer mentioned without commentary (showing that the understanding was well known and required no defense) that "Jerusalem is situated on seven hills" (recorded



Christian would have scoffed at such an idea. Let us grant that Jerusalem sat on seven hills, and grant that she persecuted saints, prophets and apostles. Still, when we wish to make a positive identification of a city or a person, we don't look for a *partial* match of known characteristics. If we try to catch a criminal suspect known to have blonde hair, blue eyes and only one arm, would we arrest everyone with blonde hair and blue eyes, never mind that they have two normal arms? Of course not. Likewise, as we interpret the entities and events of the prophetic scriptures we don't make identifications on the basis of one part of the prophetic data when other parts don't match. When *all* the data regarding Mystery Babylon the Great is taken into account, it does not match the city of Jerusalem. Far from "ruling over the kings of the earth," Jerusalem lay in ruins when the Revelation was given.²⁰

The city of Constantinople (ancient Byzantium, now Istanbul) also had seven hills "because the historic peninsula, the oldest part of the city, was built by Constantine on seven hills to match the seven hills of Rome."²¹ However, we must again note the chronological disqualification: Constantinople did not exist nor rule "over the kings of the earth" in the time of John and his first-century readers. Furthermore, Constantine's motivation for designing the layout of Constantinople as he did, "to match the seven hills of Rome," points us back to the original city of seven hills, Rome herself.

Some have even associated Mesopotamian Babylon with seven hills! This crazy idea

in *The Book of Legends*, edited by Bialik and Ravnitzky, p. 371, paragraph 111). And, so it was. Those "seven hills" are easy to identify. If one starts with the Mount of Olives just to the east of the main City of Jerusalem (but still reckoned to be located within the environs of Jerusalem), there are three summits to that Mount of Olives. The northern summit (hill) is called Scopus [Hill One], the middle summit (hill) was called Nob [Hill Two], the highest point of Olivet itself, and the southern summit (hill) was called in the Holy Scriptures the "Mount of Corruption" or "Mount of Offence" [Hill Three] (II Kings 23:13). On the middle ridge between the Kedron and the Tyropoeon Valleys there was (formerly) in the south "Mount Zion" [Hill Four] (the original "Mount Zion" and not the later southwest hill that was later called by that name), then the "Ophel Mount" [Hill Five] and then to the north of that the "Rock" around which "Fort Antonia" was built [Hill Six]. And finally, there was the southwest hill itself [Hill Seven] that finally became known in the time of Simon the Hasmonean as the new "Mount Zion." This makes "Seven Hills" in all. <http://www.askelm.com/prophecy/p000201.htm>.

20 Even were we to grant a pre-AD 70 date for the Revelation, Jerusalem though still standing existed as a subjugated or besieged city, not as the city ruling over the kings of the earth.

21 Wikipedia.

arises from an *a priori* identification of ancient Babylon with Revelation's Mystery Babylon the Great, not from topographical reality. The reasoning goes like this:

Mystery Babylon in the Revelation *is* Mesopotamian Babylon.

Mystery Babylon in the Revelation sits on seven hills.

Therefore, Mesopotamian Babylon must sit on seven hills.

The syllogism fails because the first premise is false. Even if we accept that premise, though, anyone with internet access today can log-on to Europa Technologies' spectacular *Google Earth* and see with their own eyes (by the miracle of satellite photography) that Nebuchadnezzar's ancient city was built on the flood plain of the Euphrates.²² The base elevations of the ancient locale vary by no more than 15 or 16 feet; there are *no hills* other than those consisting of ruins.

I must acknowledge, however, that the prescient 19th century eschatology teacher and author, B. W. Newton, understood the seven hills of Mystery Babylon as symbolic. In his justified eagerness to disabuse his contemporaries of the idea that "The Great Prostitute/ Mystery Babylon the Great" was the Roman Catholic religion or the papacy, he fastened his mind too hastily on the idea that Mystery Babylon was none other than ancient Mesopotamian Babylon. He therefore had to interpret the seven hills non-literally. He reasoned this way:

"the woman is said to be seated on (1) many waters, which are explained to mean many peoples and multitudes, (2) on a beast, [and] (3) on seven mountains. Now, inasmuch as no one has ever thought of inferring from the first two of these statements that Babylon physically was builded either on waters, or on a Beast, so it should never have been inferred that Babylon *physically* was builded on seven mountains."²³

The logic of Mr. Newton's argument is sound, but he failed to take one very important thing into account, and that is the distinction between vision and interpretation. Mystery Babylon the Great is seated upon (1) many waters and (2) on the beast *in the vision*. That the waters represent "many peoples and multitudes," and that the seven heads of the beast represent "seven mountains" are part of the angel's *interpretation* of the vision, not additional mystery. If we interpret "the seven hills" as symbolically representing something else, we are interpreting the interpretation! If we do that, consistency demands that we interpret the "many peoples and multitudes" as symbolizing something else as well. However, such a reinterpretation of the angel's interpretations would be absurd, so we reaffirm that the "seven hills" of the angel's explanation are just that, the famous *and literal* seven hills of Rome.²⁴

22 On Google Earth enter the coordinates: 32° 32' 31.97" N by 44° 25' 13.68" E.

23 Newton, Benjamin Wills; *Babylon: Its Future History and Doom*, pp. 118, 119.

24 For all his insight and humility, A. W. Pink (*The Antichrist*) makes most regrettable errors in his understanding of Rev 17-18. Of Rev 17.09, he says,

"The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth, and they are seven kings." This at once disposes of the popular interpretation which regards these "seven mountains" [as] referring to the seven hills on which the city of Rome is built. The Holy Spirit expressly tells us that the seven mountains are (represent) seven kings. (Emphasis original.)

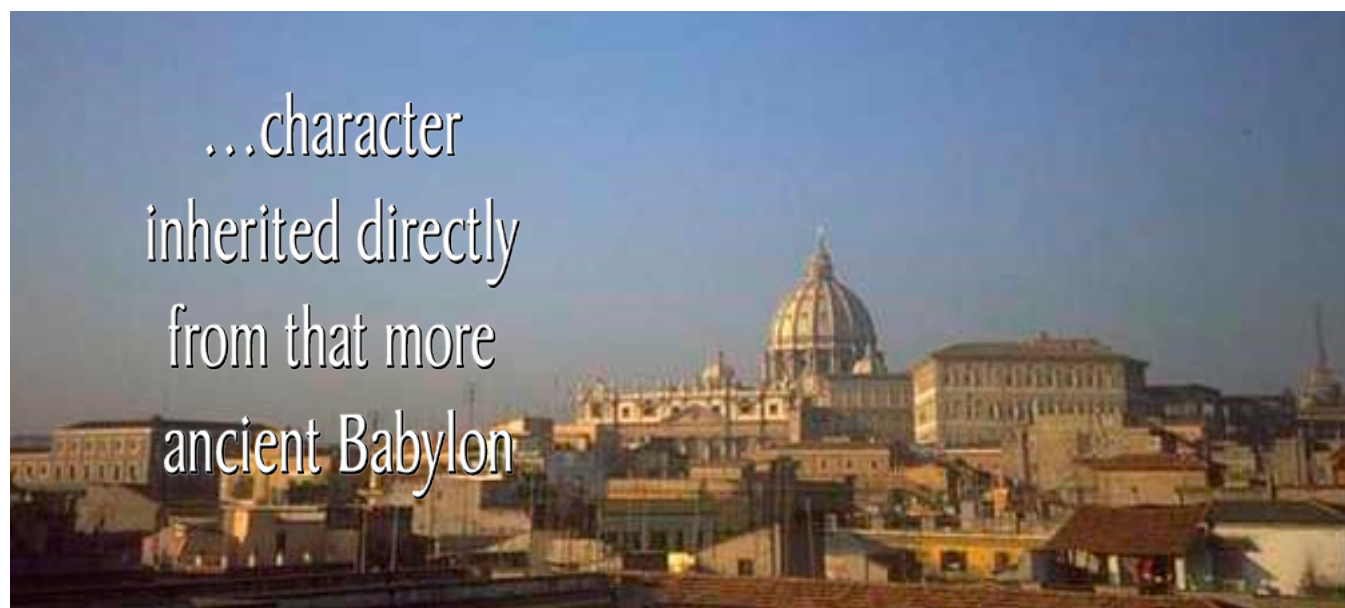
May the dear Holy Spirit guard us from falsely attributing such confusion to Him! The repetition of the verb *they are* (Grk *eisin*) in Rev 17.09 tells us that two discrete identities are presented, not two different symbols for the same reality as in Rev 11.04, nor a list of synonyms as in Rev 17.15 (note the single verb used in both these latter cases). The inspired text

I won't bother discussing our newer seven-hilled cities like Lynchburg, VA, Seattle, WA, and Seven Hills, OH.²⁵ Mystery Babylon the Great was a city easily recognized by the first-century Christians of Asia Minor. By the title "Mystery Babylon the Great" the Revelation pointed those early Christians and us to that city which stood as the first-century capital of the empire, the merciless persecutor of Christians and Jews, the city known for resting upon seven hills. That city, Rome, remains today as the capital of Italy, and has a dark role to play in the future of our world.²⁶ As "The Great Prostitute/ Mystery Babylon the Great," she cannot help but act her final part on the world stage. As she does, she will manifest her irrepressible character inherited directly from that more ancient Babylon in Mesopotamia.

THE PROSTITUTE'S CHARACTER

Relationship Between The Two Babylons

Scripture illuminates the character and future role of Rome, *Mystery Babylon the Great*, by underscoring her spiritual relationship to *Mesopotamian Babylon*. The connection is made by the language in Revelation 17 and 18 about Mystery Babylon that is culled directly from OT prophecies about Mesopotamian Babylon.²⁷ Compare the parallel passages on the next two pages:



does *not* interpret the mountains, but only the heads of the Beast. The mountains are not kings. Rather the *heads* represent both mountains and kings as two different things that pertain to the Prostitute in her relationship to the Beast. We must resist the inappropriate inclination to reinterpret the explanation of the angelic guide as though his interpretation were not enough: "The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits. They are also seven kings."

25 <http://www.sevenhillsohio.org/>.

26 Andrew of Caesarea, early 6th c., wrote "...old Rome has lost its former dominion, and it is unlikely that it will ever regain its ancient status. It is more likely, therefore, that the harlot is the earthly kingdom in general which will be condemned at the end" (quoted in Weinrich, ACCS XII: REV, p. 265). We see then that even some of the earlier interpreters hesitated to interpret the Great Prostitute as Rome, but Andrew does go on to acknowledge the possibility that the government of his own day might eventually be destroyed, opening the way for Rome's resurgence.

27 The language describing the destruction of Mystery Babylon also somewhat parallels the language in the oracles against Tyre (Eze 26-28) and Nineveh (Nahum). The parallels between Tyre and Mystery Babylon are particularly striking with regard to their mutual sins as Mediterranean merchant cities.

Mesopotamian Babylon

Jer 51.13 O you who dwell by many waters, Abundant in treasures, Your end has come, The measure of your end.

Jer 51.07 Babylon has been a golden cup in the hand of the LORD, Intoxicating all the earth. The nations have drunk of her wine; Therefore the nations are going mad.

Isa 47.05 “Sit silently, and go into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans; For you will no more be called The queen of kingdoms. 6 “I was angry with My people, I profaned My heritage, And gave them into your hand. You did not show mercy to them, On the aged you made your yoke very heavy. 7 “Yet you said, ‘I shall be a queen forever.’ 8 “Now, then, hear this, you sensual one, Who dwells securely, Who says in your heart, ‘I am, and there is no one besides me. I shall not sit as a widow, Nor shall I know loss of children.’ 9 “But these two things shall come on you suddenly in one day: Loss of children and widowhood.

Jer 51.25 “Behold, I am against you, O destroying mountain, Who destroys the whole earth,” declares the LORD, “And I will stretch out My hand against you, And roll you down from the crags And I will make you a burnt out mountain.... 30 Babylon’s warriors have stopped fighting; they remain in their strongholds. Their strength is exhausted; they have become like women. Her dwellings are set on fire; the bars of her gates are broken.

Isa 48.20 Leave Babylon, flee from the Babylonians! Announce this with shouts of joy and proclaim it. Send it out to the ends of the earth; say, “The LORD has redeemed his servant Jacob.”

Jer 50.08 “Flee out of Babylon; leave the land of the Babylonians, and be like the goats that lead the flock....

Jer 51.06 Flee from the midst of Babylon, And each of you save his life! Do not be destroyed in her punishment, For this is the LORD’s time of vengeance; He is going to render recompense to her.... 45 “Come forth from her midst, My people, And each of you save yourselves From the fierce anger of the LORD.

Jer. 51.09 We applied healing to Babylon, but she was not healed; Forsake her and let us each go to his own country, For her judgment has reached to heaven And towers up to the very skies.

Mystery Babylon the Great

Rev 17.01 ...“Come here, I shall show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters...

Rev 17.02 ...with whom the kings of the earth committed acts of immorality, and those who dwell on the earth were made drunk with the wine of her immorality,”... 4 And the woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a gold cup full of abominations and of the unclean things of her immorality...

Rev 17.18 “And the woman whom you saw is the great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth.” ... Rev 18.7 “To the degree that she glorified herself and lived sensuously, to the same degree give her torment and mourning; for she says in her heart, ‘I sit as a queen and I am not a widow, and will never see mourning.’ 8 “For this reason in one day her plagues will come, pestilence and mourning and famine...

Rev 18.08 ...and she will be burned up with fire; for the Lord God who judges her is strong.

Rev. 18.04 And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, “Come out of her, my people, that you may not participate in her sins and that you may not receive of her plagues...

Rev 18.05 for her sins have piled up as high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.

Mesopotamian Babylon

Jer 50.15 ...For this is the vengeance of the LORD: Take vengeance on her; As she has done to others, so do to her.... 29 “Summon many against Babylon, All those who bend the bow: Encamp against her on every side, Let there be no escape. Repay her according to her work; According to all that she has done, so do to her; For she has become arrogant against the LORD, Against the Holy One of Israel.

Is. 21.09 “Now behold, here comes a troop of riders, horsemen in pairs.” And one answered and said, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon; And all the images of her gods are shattered on the ground.”

Jer. 51.08 Suddenly Babylon has fallen and been broken; Wail over her! Bring balm for her pain; Perhaps she may be healed.

Jer 50.39 “So desert creatures and hyenas will live there, and there the owl will dwell. It will never again be inhabited or lived in from generation to generation. Jer 51.37 Babylon will be a heap of ruins, a haunt of jackals, an object of horror and scorn, a place where no one lives.

Is. 13.21 But desert creatures will lie down there, And their houses will be full of owls, Ostriches also will live there, and shaggy goats will frolic there.

Isa 14.23 “I will turn her into a place for owls and into swampland; I will sweep her with the broom of destruction,” declares the LORD Almighty.

Jer 51.63 When you finish reading this scroll, tie a stone to it and throw it into the Euphrates. 64 Then say, ‘So will Babylon sink to rise no more because of the disaster I will bring upon her. And her people will fall.’”

Jer 51.48 Then heaven and earth and all that is in them will shout for joy over Babylon, for out of the north destroyers will attack her,” declares the LORD.

Jer 51.49 “Babylon must fall because of Israel’s slain, just as the slain in all the earth have fallen because of Babylon.

Mystery Babylon the Great

Rev 18.06 “Pay her back even as she has paid, and give back to her double according to her deeds; in the cup which she has mixed, mix twice as much for her.

Rev 18.02 And he cried out with a mighty voice, saying, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!...

Rev 18.02 ...And she has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird.

Rev 18.21 And a strong angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, “Thus will Babylon, the great city, be thrown down with violence, and will not be found any longer.

Rev 18.20 Rejoice over her, O heaven! Rejoice, saints and apostles and prophets! God has judged her for the way she treated you.

Rev 18.24 In her was found the blood of prophets and of the saints, and of all who have been killed on the earth.”

We see in the first pair of passages, Jer 51.13 and Rev 17.01, that both Mesopotamian Babylon and Mystery Babylon the Great (Rome) *dwell by* or *sit on* “many waters.” As noted above, the angel interpreted the “many waters” in the latter passage as meaning “peoples, multitudes, nations and languages” (Rev 17.15). The significance has to do with commercial control. Mesopotamian Babylon literally dwelled by many waters in that she sat on banks of the Euphrates and near the Tigris, the great trade rivers of the Middle East. Controlling the crossings of these rivers brought Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon great wealth and political power. Mystery Babylon (Rome) literally “sits on many waters” in that she has proximity to the Mediterranean Sea, but figuratively “sits on many waters” in the sense that she will dominate many peoples, as she once did, by controlling the trade not only along the distant Euphrates which lay at the edge of imperial Rome’s eastern domains, but also the commerce of all the nearer nations whose shipping routes crisscross the Mediterranean Sea. As we shall see, *it is this mirrored propensity for controlling regional commerce that will bring the two Babylons into an End-Time confrontation!*

Rome The Spiritual Heir

The other pairs of passages, in which the Revelation echoes the OT prophets, make it clear that Mystery Babylon, the “Mother of Prostitutes,” is the *spiritual daughter* of Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon.²⁸ Rome is the spiritual heir, of Mesopotamian Babylon inheriting her spirit, her sins, and one day also her judgments. Evil spirits probably sealed this relationship, migrating from the Euphrates to the Tiber with the heads of the Chaldean religion who were expelled from Mesopotamia after the death of Belshazzar.²⁹ When the conquering Medo-Persians brought their own Zoroastrian religion with them to Babylon, the Chaldean Magi fled to Asia Minor and made their new headquarters at Pergamos (or, Pergamum “where Satan’s throne is,” Rev 02.12). When Pergamos’ last king, Attalus III, bequeathed his dominions to Rome, Julius Caesar subsequently laid claim to both Pergamos’ regal and *spiritual* authority. In short, the ancient Babylonian religion of Belshazzar hopped from Babylon to Pergamos to Rome. Along with Babylon’s religion and priesthood undoubtedly came invisible hitchhikers.³⁰

Counterfeit Religion and Material Greed

Not that pagan Rome had any lack of demonic influences before the Chaldean contingent showed up! Nevertheless, the spirit(s) of ancient Babylon brought a strong impetus toward counterfeit religion, and reinforced the avarice that Rome already had. Since the arrival of those spiritual influences, Rome has ceaselessly promoted counterfeit spirituality and indulged her material greed. Historically, when biblical faith has gotten in the way of these drives, Rome has viciously retaliated.

We see this false spirituality and rapacious greed in Rome’s Caesar-worship of the early Christian centuries, and again later in the Roman Catholic Inquisition. Should we then expect an End-Time revival of Caesar worship or a reinstitution of the Inquisition? Will the pope turn out to be the Antichrist after all? Will Roman Catholicism in fact reign as Mystery Babylon’s End-Time religion? No. Caesar worship and the Inquisition will have

28 Making the latter the “Grandmother of Prostitutes,” I suppose.

29 Hislop, pp. 240, 241, citing Barker and Ainsworth’s *Lares and Penates of Cilicia* (readable on Google Books), ch. 8.

30 We do well to remember that in antiquity every nation and city had its tutelary deities. Paul explains that these pagan gods are actually demons (1Co 10.20). I’m convinced that such evil spirits continue to influence the character of every city that remains unsubmitted to Jesus Christ.

their echoes in the End-Time persecution of Christians and Jews, but we must once and for all set aside the hasty interpretation of the Reformers and disassociate Roman Catholicism from the vision of Revelation 17.01 to 19.04. In order to do so, and to truly understand the “religion” of the Great Prostitute, we must digress and consider some things the Bible says about the Prostitute’s nemesis, the Antichrist.

THE PROSTITUTE’S NEMESIS

The Little Horn’s Little Domain

Judging from audience reaction, the most unpopular thing I teach about the End Time is that Antichrist’s rule will *not* be global. I thought that my eschatology students would receive this as good news, and many do. For others, however, the idea that Antichrist will rule a universal, one-world government has almost become a tenet of faith. I don’t wish to offend anyone by undermining their long-held assumptions, but this idea that has so taken hold on the American evangelical imagination, the idea of a global dictatorship under 666, is simply not taught in Scripture.

Where then did this idea of a global “Anti-Christendom” come from? In part from NASA! Ever since the advent of photography from space, whenever someone mentions “the whole world,” we can’t help but imagine photos of our planet as a beautiful, cloud swept ball. So, when it comes to Revelation’s passages about the reign of the Beast, we think in terms of the whole planet: “Rev 13.08 says, ‘All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast!’”³¹ When we make such statements, we’d like to think that we’re simply embracing the plain sense of Scripture, but in reality we’re reading the first-century Hebraized text through a 20th or 21st-century Gentile lens. It’s only natural. When we Americans read in Rev 13.03 (NIV), that “*the whole world* was astonished and followed the beast...” we assume that the Beast will rule the entire planet.



However, prophecies of End-Time events refer geographically *only* to the greater Mediterranean world.³² While many biblical statements about “the earth,” particularly with reference to its creation, clearly designate the whole planet, the same biblical language often refers to a much smaller geographical region, even when speaking of “the whole earth.” It is naïve to read our English Bibles as though their every reference to the “world” or to the “whole world” refers to our entire globe. For example, “The whole world (*kal-haaretz*) sought audience with Solomon to hear the wisdom God had put in his heart” (1Ki 10.24, NIV). No expositor of our time would suggest that “the whole world” in this passage included emissaries from North America and Japan. Rather, the whole world that basked in Solomon’s wisdom was the Middle Eastern world surrounding the Holy Land. Nor did Caesar Augustus send

31 I trust the reader agrees that “the Beast” is Revelation’s designation of the Antichrist, even as “the little horn” is Daniel’s and “the man of lawlessness” is Paul’s in 2Th 2.

32 For a full demonstration of this fact I refer the reader to my treatise entitled, “The Beast At The Center Of The World: How The Prophets And Apostles Understood The End Time Geography.” This treatise is available gratis at <http://www.tmin.org/pdfs/BeastatCenter.pdf>.

tax collectors to Argentina and Indonesia when he decided “that all the world (Grk: *pasan ten oikoumene*) should be taxed” (Luk 02.01, KJV). No, on the contrary, as one reads from Genesis to Revelation, the general Hebrew and Greek phrases translated “the earth” or “the world” increasingly refer to the region that surrounds Israel and extends roughly to the boundaries of the ancient Roman Empire.

Beastland

“Aha!” I can hear someone say. “We’ve heard prophecy teachers mention a coming ‘revived Roman Empire.’ Is this the ‘whole world’ that the Antichrist will rule? Will the Beast reign over the Mediterranean, encompassing all the territories of the ancient Roman Empire?”

No. The Antichrist will rule *within* the boundaries of the old Roman Empire, but not over all its territories. We have already seen that “The Great Prostitute/Mystery Babylon” is the city of Rome, and she does not submit to the Beast’s sovereignty but instead *rides him*. The Beast’s seat of power lies elsewhere.

Prophecy teachers are on the right track when they speak of the Antichrist ruling a revived empire, but as George H. Fromow has said, “We do well to speak of a ‘final federation of the fourth empire’ [of Daniel’s prophecy] rather than of the ‘Roman Empire.’ It will be more Babylonian than Roman.”³³ Fromow is correct, for Daniel chapter 8 constrains the kingdom of Antichrist (who is called “the little horn” in this context), to the Grecian dominions of the *eastern* Mediterranean. Daniel 11 goes on to identify the “despicable person” (Dan 11.21) whose people will set up the “abomination of desolation” (Dan 11.31) as “the king of the North,” (Dan 11.40), i.e., the king of the Seleucid or Syrian section of Alexander’s one-time empire.³⁴ That Seleucid section stretched from what is now Turkey to the Persian Gulf (see map on the next page).³⁵ Isaiah confirms that the Antichrist will emerge from this Seleucid region when he calls him “the Assyrian” (Isa 14.25, NIV).³⁶ In fact, in the same context Isaiah calls him the king of [Mesopotamian] Babylon (Isa 14.04).

The Antichrist’s Ethnicity

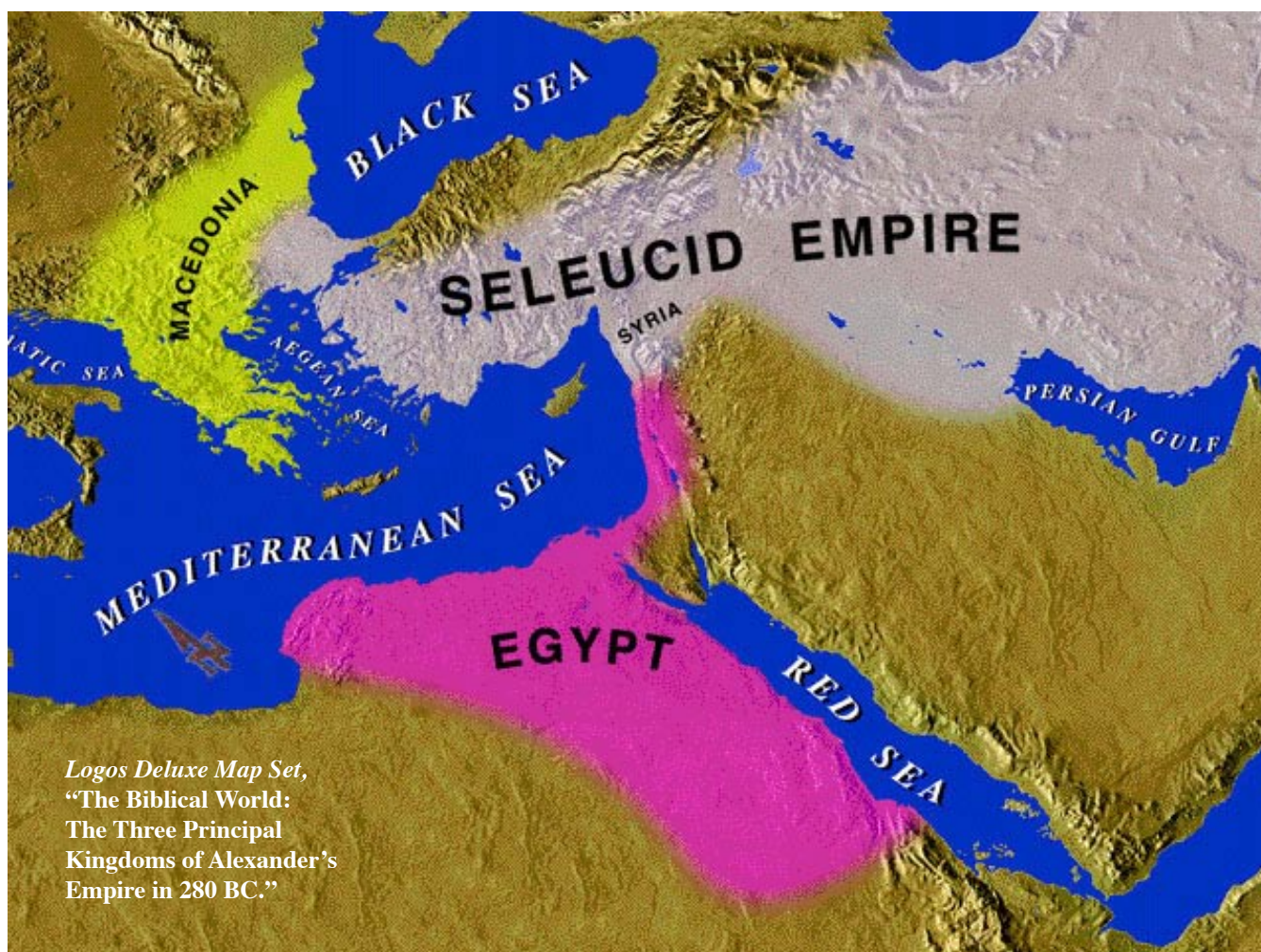
That the Antichrist will arise as the king of Mesopotamian Babylon may surprise readers who have been taught that he will be a Roman. I affirm that Antichrist *will be* Roman in his imperialistic and voracious spirit, as well as Roman inasmuch as he arises within the easternmost territory of the Caesars. Ethnically, however, he will be an Arab. We know this from the very verse in Daniel that many of us once misunderstood as implying his Roman lineage. That verse is Dan 09.26:

33 *Watching and Waiting*, April/June 1998.

34 Joel 2.20 refers to Antichrist’s army as “the northern army.”

35 Perhaps 80% of the available commentaries on Daniel interpret the whole of chapter 11 as describing the intrigues of the Greek kings that arose after Alexander. These commentaries focus upon the evils of Antiochus IV, Epiphanes, as the great villain of that era, and their inclination is to see this passage as pseudo-prophecy written after the fact as political propaganda. If we accept Daniel 11 and 12 as true and predictive prophecy, however, then we accept that its narrative takes us right up to the End Time (11.40), even to Daniel’s resurrection at the end of days (12.12). Given this premise, we recognize the “abomination of desolation” of 11.31 as being the same End Time “abomination of desolation” of 12.11, and its perpetrator as being not Antiochus IV, the Antichrist prefigured in the Greek era, but the ultimate Antichrist at the end of the age.

36 The NASB and CSB omit the article, “I will break... Assyria.” However, the masculine singular suffix in the following clause justifies the article’s insertion in the preceding one.



“Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined.”

In this text, Gabriel calls the Antichrist “the prince who is to come.” He states that “the people” of this coming prince “will destroy the city [i.e., Jerusalem] and the sanctuary” after the cutting-off of Messiah. In the subsequent unfolding of history, it turned out that the people who destroyed Jerusalem and her temple after the crucifixion of Messiah were the Roman legions, and therefore, “the people of the prince who is to come” were the legionnaires. Since “the people of the prince who is to come” served in the Roman legions, it’s logical to conclude that the prince himself — when he comes — will be Roman. The missing datum for many of us, however, was that the Imperial legions who destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70 were the eastern auxiliaries made up of troops from Egypt, Syria, southeastern Turkey, Jordan and Saudi Arabia.³⁷ The “people” who destroyed Jerusalem were predominantly Arabs!

³⁷ Josephus *Wars* 3.1.3; 3.2.4; 3.4.2. See also Livingston, p. 176. I’ve only found reference to 4 legions participating in the siege of Jerusalem, X Fretensis, in conjunction with V Macedonica, XII Fulminata, and XV Apollinaris. This should represent only about 24,000 soldiers. (Legion + cavalry = 6,000.) However, Josephus reports that auxiliaries inflated the number of participants against the Jews to 60,000! Not only were the legions proper from the east, but it would appear that the vast majority of the “Roman” combatants were from the surrounding eastern nations!

Babylons Rising

The Unfulfilled Doom of Mesopotamian Babylon

We see then, a consistent and coherent teaching in Scripture that Antichrist will arise within the domains of the final and fourth of Daniel's kingdoms (Dan 07), within the Seleucid section of Alexander's splintered empire (Dan 08), as the "king of the North" (Dan 11.40), an Arab (Dan 09.26), an Assyrian (Isa 14.25), and the king of [Mesopotamian] Babylon (Isa 14.04). This explains the confrontation described in Rev 17.16, for we now understand that *two* Babylons will arise in the End Time. Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon of the East will rise again under the Beast (Antichrist), and contemporaneously Rome will receive her mantle as the Mystery Babylon of the West.

We know that ancient Mesopotamian Babylon, the Babylon of the East, will rise again because, as B. W. Newton has so thoroughly documented, the biblical prophecies of her *violent* and irrevocable destruction have yet to be fulfilled.³⁸ Since "not the smallest letter nor the least stroke of a pen will by any means disappear from the Law [or the prophets] until everything is accomplished" (Mat 05.17-18), we must expect a still future ruination of this great Mesopotamian city, preceded by a present rebirth.³⁹ Sure enough, this Babylon, lying within the borders of modern Iraq, is even now beginning to stand to its feet! Extensive walls and corridors of the ancient city have been cleared and reconstructed. A rebuilt Ishtar gate stands at the entrance to the ancient site, and one of Saddam's palaces crowns the high point beside the Euphrates. Also along the Euphrates, to the south of the palace, a modern military-commercial complex has sprung up. Across the river to the northwest, lies contemporary Babylon's active farming village. All of this can be clearly seen in Google Earth's wonderful satellite photography. It seems crazy to say that Mesopotamian Babylon will be utterly destroyed when it is now just stirring back to life, but just as God — *at a time when Jerusalem lay in the rubble to which Nebuchadnezzar had reduced her* — revealed to Daniel a yet future rebuilding *and* destruction of Jerusalem and her temple (Dan 09.25-26), even so the Lord has shown us in prophecy that Mesopotamian Babylon will yet fall a final time, and this requires that the city not only reappear but also regain its civic prominence.

The Lord reveals the future doom of this Mesopotamian/Iraqi Babylon in one of the oracles of Isaiah (13.01 to 14.27). This prophecy declares that Babylon's fall will occur in the apocalyptic Day of the LORD (Heb: *yom YHVH*, Isa 13.06), that day announced by the darkening of the sun, moon and stars (Isa 13.10; cf. Mat 24.29; Rev 06.12-17). In Isaiah's oracle, we also see that the future destruction of Babylon will have the same totality as that of Sodom and Gomorrah (v. 19; Jer 50.40), and will be accompanied by a desolation of the *whole land* (Isa 13.09; 14.20; cf. Jer 50.03).

Isaiah's mention of the Medes as God's agents of death (Isa 13.17-18) may tempt us to think that this oracle only foreshadowed the now historical conquest of Babylon by Cyrus and Darius. We must reject that thinking, however, for in 541 BC Cyrus captured Babylon by surprise and *without destruction*, having diverted the river that flowed under the city walls so his soldiers could sneak in through the breach. Yes, Darius did have to recapture Babylon after a rebellion in 516 BC, and at that time he killed a portion of the population and tore down the outer walls. However, even this crisis did not hinder the city from continuing to

38 Tertullian (c. AD 200), in *On The Resurrection Of The Flesh*, ch. 22, argued that the resurrection was yet future, saying that, "No one has as yet fallen in with Elias; no one has as yet escaped from Antichrist; no one has as yet had to bewail the downfall of Babylon." However, he may well have had Rome in view here rather than Mesopotamian Babylon.

39 See Newton, B. W.; *Babylon & Egypt: Their Future History And Doom*; (SGAT, London, 1890), ch. 1 and following.

flourish until after the death of Alexander the Great. After Alexander, Babylon began to decline, but only by neglect.⁴⁰ No Sodom-and-Gomorra-like destruction of the city occurred under the Medes of Darius, and far less did any devastation fall upon the whole land of Mesopotamia. Both of these predictions await a future fulfillment.

Isaiah's oracle concerning Babylon provides further insight still, for this prophecy about Babylon's destruction coincides with the time of Israel's exaltation. In that time, God will show Israel such favor that she will rule over the nations (Isa 14.01-02)!

Also, Isaiah's oracle is not just about the land and city of Babylon, but about a particularly loathsome *king* of Babylon whom Israel will mock at the time of his downfall (Isa 14.03-04). Others beside Israel will rejoice at this king's demise. Like trees of the forest preserved from the woodsman's axe, the peoples of the Middle East will rejoice that this despot can no longer cut them down (Isa 14.07-08). All the surrounding nations will celebrate the downfall of Babylon's king, and with good reason, because he "struck down peoples with unceasing blows," (Isa 14.06), so that Jeremiah characterizes him and his nation as "the hammer of the whole earth" (Jer 50.23).

There's more. Isaiah's oracle reveals the spiritual heritage of this Babylonian king, telling us that he will arise in the very spirit of Lucifer (Isa 14.12-14), exalting himself to the point of assuming the very judicial authority of God previously manifested on Mount Sinai (Act 07.38) and Mount Zion (cf. Lam 2.06)! And yet this king will be a mere human, for those who ponder his fate will say, "Is this *the man* who shook the earth and made kingdoms tremble, the man who made the world a desert, who overthrew its cities and would not let his captives go home?" (Isa 14.16-17).

Finally, the destruction of this Assyrian king of Babylon, of his land, and of his descendants will be *total* (Isa 14.19-23), and his personal demise will occur on the very mountains of Israel:

Future News:

Watch for the more vigorous rebuilding of the ancient city of Babylon in Iraq.

Future News:

Watch for the stabilization of Iraq, followed by its economic and military growth.

Isa 14.24 The LORD Almighty has sworn, "Surely, as I have planned, so it will be, and as I have purposed, so it will stand. 25 I will crush the Assyrian in my land; on my mountains I will trample him down. His yoke will be taken from my people, and his burden removed from their shoulders." 26 This is the plan determined for the whole world; this is the hand stretched out over all nations. 27 For the LORD Almighty has purposed, and who can thwart him? His hand is stretched out, and who can turn it back?

40 See Newton, p. 31ff.

None of this has occurred yet. Indeed, Jeremiah puts the final punishment of “the king of Babylon and his land” in that time when a “search will be made for Israel’s guilt, but there will be none, and for the sins of Judah, but none will be found, for I will forgive the remnant I spare” (Jer 50.18-20). Israel has not yet left her sins behind; the fountain has not yet been opened “to cleanse her from sin and impurity” (Zec 13.01). Neither has the Assyrian king of Babylon — whom we know from other prophecies, and commonly call *the Antichrist* — yet met his doom on the mountains of Judah. So, on the basis of all this data, we still await a total destruction of Mesopotamian Babylon that will occur in the Day of the LORD, concurrent with the demise of the Antichrist, and that will usher in the international supremacy of Israel. Before all this can happen, *ancient Babylon of the East — both the city and its empire — must rise again.*

THE PROSTITUTE’S DOOM

Likewise, Mystery Babylon of the West (Rome) must rise to prominence as Europe’s capital of commerce before she finally collapses in utter devastation.

The prophets of the OT didn’t mention this western Babylon by name, but Isaiah foreshadowed her character and destruction in his oracle concerning Tyre, the island port city on the Phoenician coast (Isa 23). Like Mystery Babylon, Isaiah characterized Tyre as “the marketplace of nations ... whose merchants are princes, whose traders are renowned in the earth” (Isa 23.03,08). Hear the echo of this language in the angel’s description of Mystery Babylon in Rev 18.23 (NASB): “Your merchants were the great men of the earth.” Also, Isaiah characterized Tyre as a prostitute who would “ply her trade with all the kingdoms on the face of the earth” (Isa 23.17), even as Mystery Babylon is the Great Prostitute with whom “the kings of the earth committed adultery” (Rev 17.02; 18.03).

Tyre foreshadows Mystery Babylon even more pointedly in Ezekiel’s extensive prophecy about the Phoenician city. Even as the Beast and his ten kings will leave Mystery Babylon naked and “eat her flesh,” so God announced to Tyre that Nebuchadnezzar “will plunder your wealth and loot your merchandise” (Rev 17.16; Eze 26.12). Just as the sounds of habitation in Mystery Babylon will fall silent, so the LORD spoke through Ezekiel to Tyre, saying, “I will put an end to your noisy songs, and the music of your harps will be heard no more” (Rev 18.22; Eze 26.13). In the same way that “the kings of the earth” who commit adultery with Mystery Babylon “will weep and mourn over her,” so would “all the princes of the coast ... sit on the ground,” and “take up a lament” concerning Tyre (Rev 18.09; Eze 26.16,17). Just as the mighty angel announced that Mystery Babylon would be thrown down “never to be found again,” so the Lord spoke of making Tyre “a desolate city, like cities no longer inhabited,” a city that would go down into the pit and “not return,” a city that would “be sought, but ... never again be found” (Rev 18.21; Eze 26.19-21).

The parallels between Tyre and Mystery Babylon have to do with controlling the commerce of the Mediterranean. Just as “the kings of the earth” will share in the luxury of Mystery Babylon, so “with her great wealth” Tyre “enriched the kings of the earth” (Rev 18.09; Eze 27.33). In its day, Tyre was “the gateway to the sea”: “all the ships of the sea and their sailors came alongside to trade for [her] wares” (Eze 27.03,09). Even so, we will remember that “all who had ships on the sea became rich through [the] wealth” of Mystery Babylon (Rev 18.19). Indeed, the cargo manifests of Tyre and Mystery Babylon the Great are strikingly similar (see the chart on the next page). When Mystery Babylon falls, “Every sea

The Cargoes of Tyre And Mystery Babylon

Tyre

Mystery Babylon

References

Gold	Gold	Rev 18.12; Eze 27. 22
Silver, Iron, Tin and Lead	Silver	Rev 18.12; Eze 27.12
Turquoise, Rubies ... Precious Stones	Precious Stones	Rev 18.12; Eze 27.16,22
Coral		Eze 27.16
	Pearls	Rev 18.12
Fine Linen	Fine Linen	Rev 18.12; Eze 27.16
Purple Fabric	Purple	Rev 18.12; Eze 27.16
	Silk	Rev 18.12
Beautiful Garments, Blue Fabric	Scarlet Cloth	Rev 18.12; Eze 27.07,24
Embroidered Work, ... Rugs		Eze 27.07,24
	Citron Wood	Rev 18.12
Ivory Tusks and Ebony	Articles ... of Ivory	Rev 18.12; Eze 27.06,15
Cedar, Oak, Cypress Wood	Costly Wood	Rev 18.12; Eze 27.05-06
Articles of Bronze	Bronze	Rev 18.12; Eze 27.13
Iron	Iron	Rev 18.12; Eze 27.12
	Marble	Rev 18.12
Cassia and Calamus, All Kinds of Spices	Cinnamon, Spice	Rev 18.13; Eze 27.19,22
Saddle Blankets		Eze 27.20
	Incense	Rev 18.13
	Myrrh	Rev 18.13
	Frankincense	Rev 18.13
Wine	Wine	Rev 18.13; Eze 27.18
Honey, Oil and Balm	Olive Oil	Rev 18.13; Eze 27.17
Confections	Fine Flour	Rev 18.13; Eze 27.17
Wheat	Wheat	Rev 18.13; Eze 27.17
	Cattle	Rev 18.13
Wool ... Lambs, Rams, and Goats	Sheep	Rev 18.13; Eze 27.18,21
Work Horses, War Horses and Mules	Horses	Rev 18.13; Eze 27.14
	Carriages	Rev 18.13
Slaves	Bodies and Souls	Rev 18.13; Eze 27.13

captain, and all who travel by ship, the sailors, and all who earn their living from the sea, will stand far off. ... They will throw dust on their heads, and with weeping and mourning cry out: 'Woe! Woe, O great city...!'" Likewise, the LORD predicted regarding Tyre:

Eze 27.29 All who handle the oars will abandon their ships; the mariners and all the seamen will stand on the shore. 30 They will raise their voice and cry bitterly over you; they will sprinkle dust on their heads and roll in ashes. 31 They will shave their heads because of you and will put on sackcloth. They will weep over you with anguish of soul and with bitter mourning. 32 As they wail and mourn over you, they will take up a lament concerning you: "Who was ever silenced like Tyre...?"

The LORD predicted all this woe upon Tyre at the hands of many nations (Eze 26.03), but particularly by the attack from "Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, king of kings" (Eze 26.07). Historically, Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Tyre succeeded only partially — it fell to Alexander the Great to finish the conquest of the island city by building a causeway to it. Our concern here, however, is with the typology by which Tyre's history foreshadows that of Mystery Babylon, and in this matter the role of Nebuchadnezzar is most important. Nebuchadnezzar attacked Tyre precisely for *economic* reasons, in an attempt to control his world's western hub of commerce. In the same way, the coming king of Babylon, also a "king of [ten] kings," will attack Mystery Babylon (Rome) for economic reasons, endeavoring to add control of Europe's commerce to the control already achieved over his own economy in the Middle East.

But let us return to the prophecies of Isaiah. Isaiah's oracle about Tyre (Isa 23) flows into chapters often called "The Isaiah Apocalypse" (Isa 24-27). These chapters describe devastating judgments upon the world and among the nations (Isa 24.03,13), but most interestingly they mention *an anonymous city* that "lies desolate" (Isa 24.10) and "is left in ruins" (Isa 24.12). This part of the Isaiah Apocalypse tells of inhabitants who are "burned up" (Isa 24.06), and describes the ominous silence that follows complete destruction, saying, "The gaiety of the tambourines is stilled, the noise of the revelers has stopped, the joyful harp is silent" (Isa 24.08). Similarly, Rev 18.22 describes the demise of Mystery Babylon, saying, "The music of harpists and musicians, flute players and trumpeters, will never be heard in you again." The Isaiah passage goes on to describe an End-Time shaking and breaking up of the earth that causes a certain part of it to fall, "never to rise again" because of its guilt and rebellion (Isa 24.20-21). Rev 18.21 echoes Isaiah as a mighty angel plunges a boulder into the sea and says, "the great city of Babylon will be thrown down, never to be found again."

The "Isaiah Apocalypse" then turns into psalms of triumph:

They raise their voices, they shout for joy;
from the west they acclaim the LORD's majesty.
Therefore in the east give glory to the Lord;
exalt the name of the LORD, the God of Israel,
in the islands of the sea.
From the ends of the earth we hear singing:
"Glory to the Righteous One."
(Isa 24.14-16a)

You have made the city a heap of rubble,
the fortified town a ruin,
the foreigners' stronghold a city no more;
it will never be rebuilt.
(Isa 25.02)

The same thing happens in Rev 19. The prophecy about Mystery Babylon turns into a song of triumph:

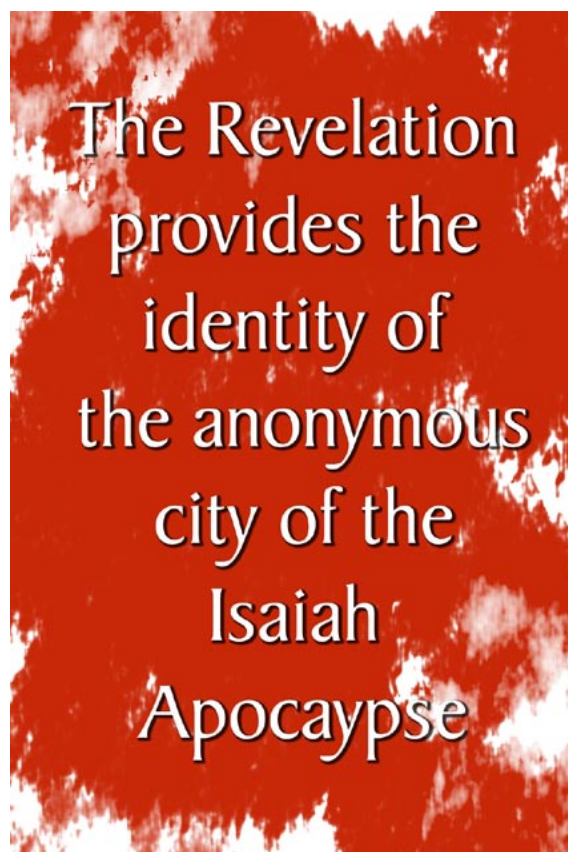
“Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, 2 for true and just are his judgments. He has condemned the great prostitute who corrupted the earth by her adulteries. He has avenged on her the blood of his servants.” 3 And again they shouted: “Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever.”

In final parallels between Isa 24-27 and the closing visions of the Revelation, the “Isaiah Apocalypse” speaks of the punishment of the serpent (Isa 27.01), the resurrection of the righteous (Isa 26.19), and the city of God (Isa 26.01-02). In Isaiah, the saints sing, “We have a strong city; God makes salvation its walls and ramparts. Open the gates that the righteous nation may enter...” Likewise, the Revelation concludes by announcing the binding of the “ancient serpent,” the resurrections of both the righteous and the unrighteous, and the appearance of the Holy City (Rev 19-21):

21. 23 The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. 24 The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. 25 On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. 26 The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it.

Let me be very clear: I do *not* believe that Isaiah’s and Ezekiel’s oracles concerning Tyre are about Mystery Babylon (Rome) *per se*, but only that these oracles foreshadow Mystery Babylon’s character and demise, and that this foreshadowing is brought to our attention by the carefully chosen allusions in Rev 17.01-19.04. Nor do I believe that “The Isaiah Apocalypse” (Isa 24-27) is *only* about Mystery Babylon. “The Isaiah Apocalypse” tells a bigger story about God’s judgment upon the nations in which, I believe, Mystery Babylon (Rome) appears anonymously as a subtopic. Just as Revelation, chapter 20, provides previously undisclosed details about the LORD’s earthly reign (a topic extensively covered by the OT prophets), even so Revelation 17.01-19.04 provides us with previously undisclosed details about the End-Time role *and identity* of Isaiah’s anonymous city that will become “a heap of rubble” and “never be rebuilt” (Isa 25.02). Thanks to the Revelation given to John, we now know the identity of Isaiah’s doomed city, and something of the dark role she will play in the End-Time drama.

John is unique among the biblical prophets in identifying Rome as that doomed city of Isaiah, but John was *not alone* in his expectation of Rome’s apocalyptic destruction. Nor are we alone in understanding John’s revelation as indicating Rome when it speaks of [Mystery] Babylon and her demise. Various church fathers spoke of Rome as “Babylon,” and early Christian writers foresaw a coming destruction of this Babylon of the West (see Appendices 1 and 2). In the third century, for example, an anonymous Christian author understood that Rome, as the harlot



Babylon, would be destroyed by an invasion from the East which would also devastate much of Asia Minor!⁴¹ Also, Victorinus of Petovium (d. c. 304), commenting on Rev 07.02 and looking forward in the Revelation narrative to the final plagues, wrote of “the great overthrow of Babylon, that is, the Roman state.”⁴² Later, Oecumenius (6th century) commented on the vision of Rev 17 and 18, saying, “the vision now reveals to the Evangelist [John] what will befall Rome. ... But how will these kings lay waste to Rome, for we see that the Revelation depicts it so? Perhaps it will be the object of warfare among the kings...”⁴³

The End-Time Confrontation

The How (Rev 17.16)

Oecumenius asked an interesting question for his time. This commentator wondered, “But how will these kings lay waste to Rome ...?” Here’s what the Revelation text tells us about that:

Rev 17.16 The beast and the ten horns you saw will hate the prostitute. They will bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire.

Rev 18.08-10 Therefore in one day her plagues will overtake her: death, mourning and famine. She will be consumed by fire, for mighty is the Lord God who judges her. “When the kings of the earth who committed adultery with her and shared her luxury see the smoke of her burning, they will weep and mourn over her. Terrified at her torment, they will stand far off and cry: “Woe! Woe, O great city, O Babylon, city of power! In one hour your doom has come!”

Rev 18.17 In one hour such great wealth has been brought to ruin! ...

Rev 18.19 ... In one hour she has been brought to ruin!

Rev 18.21 Then a mighty angel picked up a boulder the size of a large millstone and threw it into the sea, and said: “With such violence the great city of Babylon will be thrown down, never to be found again.”

With these passages before us, we see that:

1. The 10-king federation of the Beast will act as the immediate agent of Rome’s destruction (Rev 17.16).
2. The Beast’s federation will deprive Rome of her material goods before, or in the course of, destroying her (Rev 17.16).
3. Rome’s destruction will be violent (Rev 18.21).
4. The Beast’s federation will burn Rome with fire (Rev 17.16; a punishment for prostitution, Gen 38.24; Lev 21.09).
5. Famine will precede and/or follow Rome’s destruction (Rev 17.16; 18.08-10).
6. Rome’s destruction will occur so suddenly that people will say it happened in one hour (Rev 18.10,17,19).
7. Rome’s destruction will be final and irreversible; she will cease to exist (Rev 18.21).

41 Appendix to *The Fourth Book Of Ezra*. Please see Appendix 1. An English translation of 4 Ezra is available in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Vol. 1* edited by Charlesworth.

42 *The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 7, Victorinus, Commentary On The Apocalypse*. Edited by The Rev. Alexander Roberts, D.D. and James Donaldson, LL.D., American reprint of the Edinburgh edition. Public domain.

43 *Commentary On The Apocalypse*, quoted in Weinrich, pp. 266, 280.

The Why (Rev 17.17-18)

The conclusion is inescapable: Two Babylons, Mesopotamian Babylon in the East and Rome in the West, will both rise to prominence and then battle one another in the End Time. But why? Why will East hate West? Why will the Beast and his ten kings bring the Great Prostitute to ruin and “burn her with fire” (Rev 17.16)? If Babylons East and West have a common heritage, as we have shown above, whence their mutual antagonism? We saw in the foreshadowing of the oracles about Tyre that there will be an economic impetus for this conflict, but let us look a little more deeply at the spiritual factors.

At a deep level, the conflict of the battling Babylons *does* have to do with their religion, but not because their religions will differ in principle. Instead, Babylons East and West will share the same spirituality, the nature of which makes conflict between its adherents inevitable. What then is this horrible spirituality? To find out, we must clear away a little more of the interpretive confusion that has accumulated in connection with Mystery Babylon over the years.

As we have already noted, those modern interpreters who share the bias of the Reformers tend to identify “The Great Prostitute/Mystery Babylon the Great” — who is undeniably Rome — with Roman Catholicism or an ecumenical and apostate Christianity dominated by the Roman church.⁴⁴ Interpreters with this inclination have missed the primary identity of the Prostitute as *a city* and have made her completely into a religious or ecclesiastical body, and because of Rev 17.2, 15 and 18, *one with seemingly universal sway*.

In recent decades, this impulse to identify the Great Prostitute as a religious entity has been driven in part by the erroneously global view of Antichrist’s reign. If Antichrist is understood to rule over the entire planet, and if the Prostitute has such vast influence, then interpreters have no choice but to see a merging or a complementarity of the identities of the Beast and the Prostitute, for there can only be one global power. However, since the Beast’s hatred of and conspiracy against the Prostitute precludes a shared identity, as does the fact that the Prostitute rides the Beast, “globalist” interpreters have explained the distinction between the two entities as religious on the one hand and political on the other. Making this kind of distinction allows expositors to envision the Beast and the Prostitute as exercising sovereignty (for a time) over the same geography as one another.⁴⁵ Dr. David Hocking’s writing in *The Coming World Leader* provides a typical example of this approach. He says:

The woman pictures a false religion that will dominate the world in the tribulation period, whereas the beast symbolizes the world government of the last half of the tribulation period.⁴⁶

Unfortunately, this interpretation leads to confusion. Dr. Hocking continues at the end of the same paragraph, saying,

The religious system of the end times will be led by the false prophet (Rev 13.11-18) whereas the political system will be led by the beast we know as the Antichrist (Rev 13.1-10).

44 However, the woman in Rev 17.6 is drunk with both the blood of the saints *and* of the martyrs of Jesus. The word *saints* in the Revelation can hardly be limited to believers of the Christian era, for the term is often linked with the prophets (Rev 16.06). No, the religious system represented by the Prostitute both precedes and spans the Christian era, and therefore cannot be limited to Roman Catholicism.

45 Indeed, the Woman’s perch upon the Beast implies geographical proximity, but far more importantly it reveals the hierarchy of authority between the two entities: the Woman controls the Beast. Their proximity is rather moral and relational than geographical, though their spheres of influence in the Mediterranean world border one another politically and obviously overlap economically.

46 Hocking, pp. 243, 244.

With this statement, Dr. Hocking introduces another important player in the great End-Time drama, *the false prophet*. While the false prophet is a new character to our present inquiry, he will be very familiar to students of the Revelation. Scripture announces him as “another beast, coming out of the earth” in Rev 13.11 and then refers back to him as “the false prophet” in Rev 16.13, 19.20 and 20.10. The Revelation describes the false prophet as the one who will perform “great and miraculous signs” (Rev 13.13), and make people “worship the first Beast” (Rev 13.12). The false prophet will decree that people worship an “image in honor of the Beast” (Rev 13.14), and will force his subjects to receive the mark of the Beast on their right hand or forehead (Rev 13.16). David Hocking says that this false prophet will lead “the religious system of the end times.”

Wait a minute. Let’s put Dr. Hocking’s line of thought into the form of a syllogism and follow it carefully. He says, in effect:

The woman = the false End-Time religion.

The *leader* of the false End-Time religion = The false prophet

Therefore, the false prophet is *the leader of the woman*.

Also:

The beast = the End-Time world government.

The *leader* of the End-Time government = the beast (Antichrist).

Therefore, the beast (Antichrist) is *the leader of the beast (world government)*.

Okay, the second syllogism works. The beast represents *both* the End-Time government *and* its leader (the Antichrist). As the Revelation says, “the beast ... is [a] king” (Rev 17.11), but also has ten horns representing ten other kings (Rev 17.12), and so must also represent a political federation, i.e., a government. That part of Dr. Hocking’s interpretation is reasonable. To return to the first syllogism, however, if the woman is the false religious system and the false prophet is the leader of that religious system, then the false prophet is the leader of “the woman” whom — according to the Scripture — the Beast hates and destroys (Rev 17.16)! *That can’t be right.*

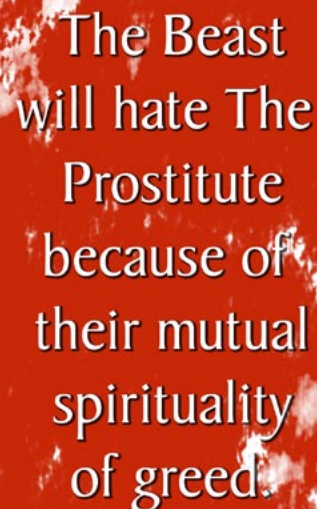
Rev 13.11-17 tells us clearly that the false prophet leads the religious system that exalts the Beast, not a religious system *hated by the Beast*. Dr. Hocking’s confused interpretation of the Great Prostitute, in which he connects her to the false prophet, implies that the Beast *hates and destroys* the religion set up *in his own honor*. We know that the Beast, the Antichrist, will never do such a thing. On the contrary, he will proclaim himself to be God (2Th 2.04) right up to the end. The Beast will *love* the religion promoted by the false prophet, not hate it.

Clearly then, the Great Prostitute and the religion of the false prophet are two entirely different things. The Beast will hate the Great Prostitute, but will love the religion of the false prophet. In fact, nothing in the description of the false prophet’s career (Rev 13.11-17; 19.20; 20.10) connects him in any way with the Great Prostitute, “the woman” of Rev 17.01-19.04. Therefore, interpreting the Great Prostitute as the “religion” of the false prophet and of the Beast does not work, and does not bolster the idea of a universal rule by the Antichrist. On the contrary, we must recognize that in the End-Time drama of the Revelation there are *two* earthly sovereignties in view: the Great Prostitute on the one side, over against the

Beast and his federation — *and his false prophet and self-glorifying religion* — on the other.

But haven't I said that Babylons East and West *will share the same spirituality*? Will they be spiritual soul mates, or face off from opposite religious poles — which is it? The answer is: *both*, but on two different levels.

They will square off from opposing sides in that Babylon West will not embrace the self-deification of the Beast; she will not share the religion of Babylon East on that level. However, the religion of Babylon West (the Great Prostitute who is *a city*, Rev 17.18) and the religion of Babylon East (the domain of the Beast, who is *a federation and its king*, Rev 17.10-11) are in principle the same. The Beast will hate the Prostitute precisely because the core principle of their shared spirituality is *greed*. Their mutual avarice will bring them into direct and deadly competition with each other.



The Beast
will hate The
Prostitute
because of
their mutual
spirituality
of greed.

Unusual Flying Objects: The End-Time Religion of Mesopotamian Babylon

Let us pursue a still deeper understanding of the Great Prostitute's character. We know that as Mystery Babylon, or Babylon *West* (End-Time Rome), she has spiritually inherited her character from Babylon *East*, the idolatrous and covetous Mesopotamian city once ruled by Nebuchadnezzar. However, the precise nature of the spirituality shared by both Babylons will become clearer as we now direct our attention to another symbolic and immoral woman, one who will soon be airlifted to Babylon *East* (End-Time Iraq). This other immoral woman appears in the vision of the Flying Ephah (measuring basket or pot) in Zechariah, chapter 5.

This chapter of Zechariah records two brief and interrelated visions given by God *after* the end of Israel's Babylonian exile. The first vision is not complex: it describes a flying scroll, and communicates a divine promise to banish every thief and perjurer from the whole land of Israel (Zec 05.01-04). This removal of persons who violate laws from both tablets of the Decalogue is an event consistent with God's intent to restore the territory of Israel as "the holy land" (Zec 02.12). Clearly, this banishment of lawbreakers from Israel has not yet occurred.

The second vision, that of The Flying Ephah, requires our more careful attention in connection with our present inquiry. Here's what Zechariah described, as given in the NASB:

Zec 05.05 Then the angel who was speaking with me went out, and said to me, "Lift up now your eyes, and see what this is, going forth." **06** And I said, "What is it?" And he said, "This is the ephah going forth." Again he said, "This is their appearance in all the land **07** (and behold, a lead cover was lifted up); and this is a woman sitting inside the ephah." **08** Then he said, "This is Wickedness!" And he threw her down into the middle of the ephah and cast the lead weight on its opening. **09** Then I lifted up my eyes and looked, and there two women were coming out [or forth] with the wind in their wings; and they had wings like the wings of a stork, and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heavens. **10** And I said to the angel who was speaking with me, "Where are they taking the ephah?" **11** Then he said to me, "To build a temple for her in the land of Shinar; and when it is prepared, she will be set there on her own pedestal."

It's difficult to relate to this ancient vision that uses such foreign images and terminology,

but as we interpret it we will quickly understand its importance. The expositor and author who seems to have most thoroughly explained the vision of the ephah, and the man to whom I am indebted for my understanding of it, is the late David Baron (1855-1926). Mr. Baron was a Jewish Christian and the cofounder of a missionary organization in London called the Hebrew Christian Testimony to Israel. Baron's book, *The Visions & Prophecies of Zechariah* (Kregel, 1972) remains the best commentary on Zechariah that I've found. I encourage you to read a longer presentation of David Baron's thoughts on the vision of the ephah in **Appendix 3**. For now I will only give a brief interpretation of the vision in order to explain its connection to our present topic.

In ancient Israel, the ephah was not the largest recognized unit of dry measure, but it *was* the largest unit of volume commonly used for the day-to-day trading of dry goods.⁴⁷ As such it serves well as a symbol of commerce. In Zechariah's vision, *ephah* refers to a container, probably of pottery, that would hold this measure of grain. Connected with the ephah container in the vision is a large disk of lead, correctly rendered by the KJV as "a talent of lead." As the ephah was the largest commercial measure of volume in ancient Israel, the talent was the largest measure of weight. Merchants used a lead talent (about 75 lbs.) in commercial transactions for weighing out gold, silver, and other trade materials. So in this vision, we have two important symbols of commerce conjoined.

The angel in the vision describes this ephah as "*going forth*," a detail missed by the NIV. The ephah goes forth in the same sense that the curse-scroll *goes forth* in the preceding vision (Zec 05.03), in David Baron's words, "to pervade the people with its influence."⁴⁸ The result is that this symbol of commerce imprints its "appearance" (or character) upon the people of the land. The NIV and other versions follow the Septuagint at the end of verse 6, which interpreted this last point, saying, "This (i.e., the ephah) is the *iniquity* of the people throughout the land."

So, the ephah symbolizes commerce and at the same time represents a pervasive sin or immoral influence among the people of Israel. David Baron sheds light on this "influence" from Jewish history:

If we ask ourselves what was this new power, or principle, which exercised such a mighty formative influence over the Jewish people ever since the Babylonian Captivity, and which is gradually also bringing all the other nations of the earth under its sway, the answer is *trade or commerce, of which the ephah is the natural emblem.*

With their banishment to Babylon and subsequent dispersion and peculiar position among the nations, there not only began an altogether new period of Jewish history, but there commenced also the processes by which the bulk of the nation became gradually transformed from an agricultural and pastoral people into a nation of merchantmen, and the new occupations into which they were forced by the altered circumstances tended in a peculiar sense to develop the two transgressions (namely, *theft* and *perjury*) which are specified in the preceding vision of the Flying Roll, with which this vision of the ephah stands very closely related. Idolatry, into which they were so liable to fall, was for ever left behind in Babylon; but a godless commercialism, with its temptations "to make the ephah small and the shekel great, and to deal falsely with balances of deceit" (Amo 08.05), eventually becomes not less hateful to God — not only because it has too often been supported by *theft* and *perjury*, which, as we have seen, are transgressions of the central commands of both tables of the Law, but because it was destined to develop a new *system* in which all iniquity would finally be summed up. [Italics his.]⁴⁹

In short, Zechariah's symbolic ephah represents a pervasive inclination toward *commercialism*, the worship of material profit, that indeed began to plague the Israelite

47 The ephah, roughly equal to 2/3 or more of today's bushel, was 1/10 of a homer (Eze 45.11).

48 "תַּחֲתָיו", the same expression as is used of the Flying Roll."

49 Baron, pp. 157-158.

people during their repeated dispersions from their agrarian homeland.

The point of the vision, however, is not that Jews are greedy or materialistic — greed knows no racial boundaries! — , but rather that God will *remove* this spirit of immoral commercialism from the Holy Land.⁵⁰ This “spirit” is depicted in the vision as a woman. As Mr. Baron relates it:

The “talent,” or circular mass of lead, being lifted, the prophet beheld a *woman* sitting in the midst of the ephah.

“And he said” (*i.e.*, the Angel, as if to call anew the prophet’s special attention), “this is the Wickedness” — the very embodiment of iniquity, rendered in the Septuagint ἀνομία, *lawlessness*.⁵¹

Who or what is this wicked woman? Mr. Baron calls her the “hidden *moral system of which the ephah is the emblem.*” He further explains:

... it is not inappropriate that the system engendered by the ephah, which in its essence is the worship of Mammon, should be represented by a woman, “because of the power it displays as a temptress, whereby it exercises such an enticing and dangerous influence over the souls of men.” Or, as Grotius observed: This form of wickedness is here described as a woman “because she is the mother of thefts and perjuries, and of all crimes.”⁵²

The woman in the ephah, then, represents the very soul *or spirit* of Mammon worship, and this brings us “to the last act in the drama of this vision,” and to our point in discussing it in connection with Mesopotamian Babylon. To quote David Baron once more:

...when the woman attempts to escape, she is thrown back into the ephah, which becomes, so to say, the chariot in which she is carried away as something which is defiled and defiling, from the land in which God shall dwell; and the talent with which she carries on her unrighteous trade becomes the heavy weight by which she is held down till she is landed safely “in her own place,” where, after a season of lawless liberty in which she will allure men to their own destruction by her seductive attractiveness and luxury, she will be judged and destroyed, together with him who is pre-eminently styled “The Wicked One,” by the brightness of the Lord’s *parousia* (2Th 2.08).

... “By reason of the curse described (in the previous vision) as overtaking all who followed in her wicked ways,” observes Dr. Wright, “no place is left for [the ephah woman] any longer in the land of righteousness, among people whose transgressions are forgiven and who are sanctified to bring forth fruit unto holiness. The winged women, therefore, bear off the evil one to the land of Shinar, there to build for her a home and a house.”⁵³

The land of Shinar is, of course, the region encompassing the kingdom of Babel (Gen 10.10), where the tower of Babel was built (Gen 11). Indeed, the NIV, like the Septuagint, renders *Shinar* as *Babylon* in Zec 05.11. So we discover that the woman in the ephah, the wicked spirit of commercialism, is removed from Israel and transported to Babylon. Once in Babylon, she is not haphazardly dumped somewhere, but she is kept until a temple-house is built for her where she can be placed upon her own pedestal!

50 Kenneth L. Barker, in his commentary on Zechariah, ch. 5, in Gaebelien’s *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, quotes Ellis, saying, “The idolatry of Babylon must once and for all be separated from the worship of the God of Israel.” Barker also quotes Feinberg as saying, “The two visions of our chapter thus bring before us God’s twofold method of dealing with sin in His people. He pours out His wrath upon the transgressors who are impenitent, and then sees to the utter removal and banishment of sin from the land, that it may in truth be the holy land.”

51 Baron, p. 159. Let us note here that this Septuagint word *lawlessness* is the very word used of “the man of lawlessness” and of the “secret power of lawlessness” in 2Th 2.03,07.

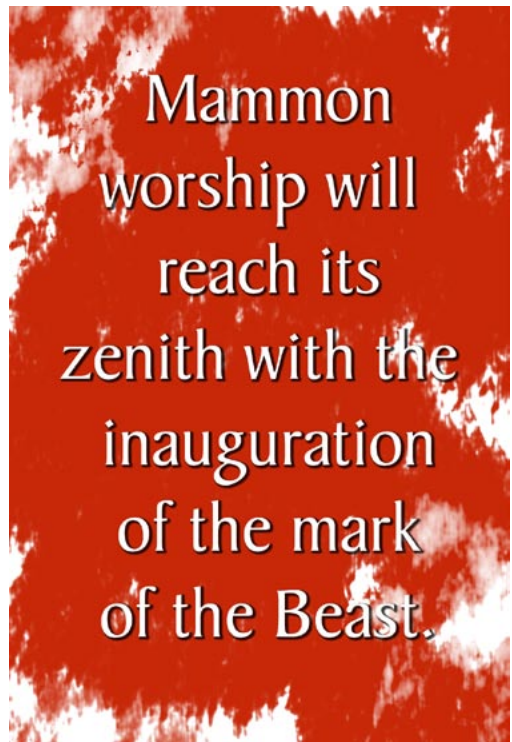
52 Ibid. p. 160.

53 Ibid., pp. 164-165.

The Allusion To Foundation Deposits In Antiquity

At this point archaeology provides some further perspective. Archaeologists in the Middle East regularly find what they call “foundation deposits” buried at one corner or another of ancient ruins. These foundation deposits typically involve a covered vessel, like a clay pot or the ephah in Zechariah’s vision, that contain among other things a figurine of a goddess (or god). These foundation deposits are obviously dedicatory offerings, placed ceremonially in the foundation of the building, with the intent of inviting prosperity to the house from the particular god invoked. Zechariah’s vision of the ephah with its “woman” tucked inside, may well have brought this pagan practice of foundation deposits to mind for Zechariah’s readers. The analogy is not perfect, because the woman in the ephah is not buried in the foundation with her ephah, but removed from it and set up on a pedestal. The points of congruence, however, between the ephah of the vision and a typical foundation deposit are enough to reinforce the religious and devotional aspect of the woman in the ephah. She is a symbol that will be venerated and invoked by those she ensnares.

In other words, the woman in the ephah, i.e., the spirit of wicked commercialism as seen in the vision, will migrate from Israel to Mesopotamian Babylon, where she will eventually be installed in a temple as the soul of *a revitalized Mammon worship*. That worship will reach its zenith with the inauguration of the mark of the Beast.



The End-Time Religion Of Babylons East And West

The End-Time religion, then, of a rebuilt Babylon in Iraq will be Mammon worship, or in contemporary language, *Commercialism*, the worship of material profit and the luxury it buys. The migration of *the spirit of Commercialism* back to ancient Babylon, a transfer symbolized in Zechariah’s vision of the Ephah, will prepare or establish the Mesopotamian city as the capital of the Beast (the Antichrist), from which his control of regional commerce will extend. From this ancient city of Nebuchadnezzar, the decrees of the false prophet will go out, announcing that *no one* can buy nor sell without first receiving “the mark, which is the name of the Beast or the number of his name” (Rev 13.17). The spirit of the Ephah, the woman of *wickedness* (Zec 05.08, LXX = *anomia*) will be exquisitely channeled by “the man of lawlessness” (2Th 2.03, Grk = *anomias*).

We know that the Antichrist will have a twofold agenda. His first priority will be his own deification (Dan 11.36,37; 2Th 2.04; Rev 13.05-06), requiring the suppression of all biblical religion. This will result in the persecution of both Jews and Christians, and any others, who refuse to acknowledge his divinity (Rev 13.07). The Antichrist’s second priority, essential to the first, will be the absolute control of all the commerce in his world. This commercial control will be necessary, not only to cow people into worshipping him, but also to fund his military ambitions.

Naturally, then, when the Beast (i.e., Antichrist and his federation of ten kings) has

largely subdued the eastern Mediterranean world, including Israel, he will turn his attention to that most prosperous entity that continues to exert unwelcome financial control over his own economy. The Beast will turn in destructive hatred against the Great Prostitute who has been riding him and reining him in by her own banking and commercial industry. The Middle Eastern empire of the Beast, inhabiting the ancient territory of the Seleucid kings, will have long depended upon the consumerism and financial favors of Western Europe, but under the leadership of the Beast, *Babylon East will demand total commercial control.*

Future News:

Watch for Europe's increasing prosperity and the growing economic authority of Rome.

In the meantime, *Babylon West*, the Great Prostitute, the city of Rome, will have become the financial capital of a continent that has prospered like never before. Already we see the nations of western Europe increasing their commercial strength, having banded together as the European Union (EU). Today the U. S. dollar is only worth 0.63 Euros. Paralleling Europe's economic progress, however, is her continuing divestment of a Judeo-Christian worldview. Her deepening renunciation of biblical morality in an already

post-Christian society will continue to give way to full-blown and ubiquitous commercial hedonism. While the book of Revelation describes unprecedented social upheavals, and both geological and astronomical catastrophes, we must remember that these describe divine judgments that particularly target the eastern realm of the Beast, and occur at the very end of the age. Until then, much of our world will continue to experience surprising normalcy, with "business as usual" in the economic sector. Indeed, Europe will even enjoy a commercial boom right up until the sudden destruction of her End-Time economy's capital city. Up to that moment, the Great Prostitute, Rome, will do a brisk business in standard commodities as well as in luxury consumer products (Rev 18.11-13).

Yes, it will be the *merchants* of the world, not the priests of some false ecumenical church who will mourn and bewail the Great Prostitute's demise:

Rev 18.03 " ... the merchants of the earth grew rich from her excessive luxuries."

Rev 18.11 "The merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her because no one buys their cargoes any more ...

Rev 18.15 "The merchants who sold these things and gained their wealth from her will stand far off, terrified at her torment. They will weep and mourn ...

Rev 18.17 ... "Every sea captain, and all who travel by ship, the sailors, and all who earn their living from the sea, will stand far off. ... 19 They will throw dust on their heads, and with weeping and mourning cry out: "Woe! Woe, O great city, where all who had ships on the sea became rich through her wealth! In one hour she has been brought to ruin! ..."

Commercialism, not Catholicism, will be the underlying, End-Time, idolatrous spirituality of both *Babylon East* and *Babylon West*.

This understanding allows us at last to return to the second part of the name, written on the forehead of the scarlet woman in John's vision:

THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH

We can take the phrase, "mother of prostitutes" as a superlative reminiscent of Saddam Hussein's warning to the United States that if we trespassed his borders we would risk "the mother of all wars." Taken in this sense, it would mean that the woman is the most depraved, the most whorish, of all prostitutes. However, if we use the superlative approach, the syntax of Rev 17.05 would then require us to paraphrase her name as:

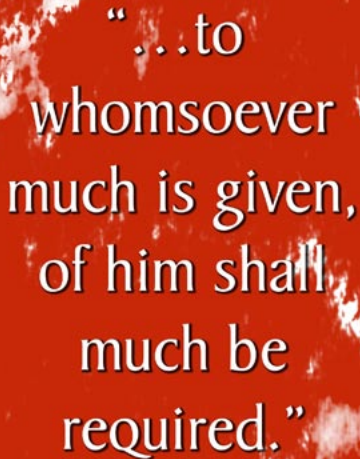
THE MOST WHORISH OF ALL PROSTITUTES AND THE MOST ABOMINABLE OF ALL ABOMINATIONS

This interpretation isn't entirely implausible, but it's more likely that we should take the word *mother* in the Prostitute's name as signifying that she is *the source*. It certainly does not mean that she herself is pure while only her offspring are immoral, but rather that her impurity is the fountainhead of all the immoral abominations of her day. This makes perfect sense when we understand that the woman, Mystery Babylon the Great, is energized heart and soul by the spirit of Mammon, for as Paul assures us, "the love of money is the root of all evil" (1Ti 6.10, KJV).⁵⁴ Indeed, the Great Prostitute's greed will not only induce her to commit manifold atrocities, but will also breed countless "whores" who "sell out" or "sell their souls" to cash in on her desire for ever more wealth and the sumptuous living it buys. Greed will give birth to greed, and the Great Prostitute's avarice will induce the merchants and kings of the Mediterranean world to stop at nothing in the course of grabbing their share of "her excessive luxuries" (Rev 18.3). If the saints get in the way, their blood will be a small price for these monstrous merchants to pay (more on this below).

So, Babylon *West*, the Great Prostitute, is the *mother* who not only prostitutes herself and commits untold abominations, but births all the great commercial whores of her time. Her god is Mammon and her creed is greed, and it is this pervasive avarice that will inevitably bring a decisive clash between the woman and Babylon *East*, the Beast, for it will drive them both to grasp for economic control of the other. In this confrontation, it will be the Beast who wins. No pampered Prostitute will stop the Beast whose greed is so fueled by megalomania that he will have tattooed his entire population with 666.

Let us observe, however, that the bottomless greed of the Beast will be *only the conscious reason* that his federation attacks the Great Prostitute. In one of the great ironies of the End-Time drama, *God* will put it into the hearts of the Beast and his royal accomplices to destroy the Prostitute (Rev 17.17). The Beast who hates God and who attempts to exalt himself above God will, nevertheless, in his rabid pursuit of economic power, accomplish the work of God in judging the Great Prostitute (Rev 19.01-02). Just as God has in the past raised

⁵⁴ Evil obviously predates money, and so our modern translations have helpfully added the words *all kinds of* before the word *evil*. The Grk text reads more literally, "For the love of money is the root of all evils" where the word *evil* is plural and helps justify the modern readings. Obviously the love of money is not the root of *all evil* in the ultimate ontological sense, for then we would have to say that even Satan first sinned because of the love of money! It's helpful to realize that Paul is paraphrasing a proverb of the philosophers who believed, "the love of money to be a metropolis of all evil" (see Robertson on 1Ti 6.10).



“...to
whomsoever
much is given,
of him shall
much be
required.”

up ungodly scourges like Shalmaneser, Nebuchadnezzar, Alaric, Attila and Muhammad to chasten his idolatrous children, and just as God has eventually broken the scourges themselves, even so at the end of the age God will raise up the Beast and his federation to chasten blatantly post-Christian Europe, before turning to utterly destroy the Beast at the Coming of Jesus.⁵⁵

Why has God purposed such a judgment against Europe? Because, “to whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required” (Luk 12.48, ASV). Europe has known the Gospel of Jesus since the first generation of Christian apostles. By the time John received the Revelation, the Christian witness had already gone west as far as London. Later, when medieval superstition had blanketed the known world and obscured the gospel, it was to Europe that God gave the counter-influence of the printing press, and in Europe that He raised up the

Reformers. When the sons of the Reformers later became formalized religionists, it was in Europe that God raised up the Lutheran Pietists, and then the men who sparked revivals and awakenings like Whitefield and the Wesleys. Other continents, including America, received the overflow of these godly influences, but they were given first to Europe.

But then Europe became the first to embrace the spirit of the so-called Enlightenment and its exaltation of human reason. It was Europe who birthed Darwin and Nietzsche, Freud and the Marx, and gave these philosophers both a hearing and a platform from which to promote their doctrine of *a God now dead* (or at least irrelevant), to the rest of the world. However, the Living God who carved the continent of Europe out of the flood with His own hands, and who through the ages provided its inhabitants with mountain reservoirs, fertile valleys and rich forests, along with the spiritual benefits already mentioned, is not dead and *neither is He amused*. In spite of all the mercies that God has poured upon Europe, showing longsuffering to her like that He once extended to Nineveh, Europe will nevertheless continue to affront her Maker, the Revelation tells us, by helping revive the international slave trade.

Therefore, in the vision of The Great Prostitute, God warns Europe! *And He warns the rest of us*, by allowing us to see part of Europe’s future.⁵⁶

55 Commodianus, in his section *XLI. — Of the Time of Antichrist*, understood the judgment of Mystery Babylon to precede a Latin Antichrist’s proclamation of deity in Jerusalem: “Isaiah said: This is the man who moveth the world anti so many kings, and under whom the land shall become desert. Hear ye how the prophet foretold concerning him. I have said nothing elaborately, but negligently. Then, doubtless, the world shall be finished when he shall appear. He himself shall divide the globe into three ruling powers, when, moreover, Nero shall be raised up from hell, Elias shall first come to seal the beloved ones; at which things the region of Africa and the northern nation, the whole earth on all sides, for seven years shall tremble. But Elias shall occupy the half of the time, Nero shall occupy half. Then the whore Babylon, being reduced to ashes, its embers shall thence advance to Jerusalem; and the Latin conqueror shall then say, I am Christ, whom ye always pray to; and, indeed, the original ones who were deceived combine to praise him. He does many wonders, since his is the false prophet. Especially that they may believe him, his image shall speak. The Almighty has given it power to appear such. The Jews, recapitulating Scriptures from him, exclaim at the same time to the Highest that they have been deceived.” Roberts, Alexander and Donaldson, James (Eds.); *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*.

56 I do not see in Rev 17.01-19.04 a prediction of Europe’s total devastation, but only of the obliteration of Rome and of the continent’s economic collapse. However, in this judgment and in the cosmic judgments related elsewhere in the Revelation,

The Sociopolitical Future of Europe and the Middle East

When John saw the Great Prostitute, she sat on the ten-horned Beast. From this we know that for a time Europe, through her financial center in Rome, will enjoy political-economic ascendancy over the Beast.⁵⁷ This should not surprise us. The present wealth of the Gulf States only exists because of the West's unquenchable thirst for oil. The ping-pong game of who retains control between the seller and the consumer will continue right up to the end, but as an AFP report stated on May 8th of 2007, "The European Union aims to harness the boom in the Gulf sparked by rising oil prices to ramp up trade and boost its political and strategic leverage in the Middle East." The Middle East of the Beast will not appreciate Europe's "leverage" in its domains, but will endure it for a time while the Antichrist consolidates his power.

All that we have stated above, implies that the nation of Iraq, so long torn by war and insurgency, will soon stabilize and become an economic and military power in its own right. The Bible is silent on the role of the United States in these developments, so on that matter we can only speculate. All we can know for certain is that America's present involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan, while *presently* benefiting Israel by drawing the fire of Islamic radicals, is somehow, mysteriously,

preparing the way for the rise of Antichrist in his Seleucid domain. Our well-meaning efforts at democratization in Iraq will eventually give way to a monarchy when the Iraqi people call for the installation of a king to rule their nation. Whether he is the first king enthroned in Babylon, or one after that, the Antichrist will be the last and the most powerful ruler that Iraq has ever known, until the return of Christ Himself. Under the Antichrist, Iraq will complete the rebuilding of Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon, and this ancient city will become the commercial center of the Middle East.

While we can also only speculate on the relationship between the Antichrist and the much anticipated Mahdi, the Muslim world's feverish interest in the imminent appearance of this "Muslim Messiah" makes it inconceivable that the Satanically energized Antichrist will fail to claim the title of *Mahdi* for himself.⁵⁸ The Antichrist will be the first Arab leader with the supernatural powers to back up a claim that he is the long-awaited 12th Imam. A powerful

Future News:

Watch for democracy to give way to monarchy in Iraq and in other Islamic nations.

Europe is bound to suffer collateral damage. And yet, even the more random blows that fall upon her will serve as God's compassionate, End-Time call to repentance.

- 57 In spite of the increasing wealth in the Middle Eastern Gulf States, the current issue of Newsweek shows only 2 individuals, 1 in Kuwait and 1 in Saudi Arabia who have a net worth of over \$10 billion. By comparison, Europe has 30 plus another 18 "decabillionaires" if we include Russia (The U.S. has 28). *Newsweek*, July 7/July 14, 2008, p. 50.
- 58 According to various Islamic sacred writings, the Mahdi is the 12th Imam who has been supernaturally preserved in hiding (occultation) since AD 900. He will originate in Saudi Arabia, then Syria and Iraq will immediately join him. He will gain power by intrigue, military action and supernatural signs. He will be a man of war whose path will be red with the blood of "unbelievers." He will claim spiritual authority over the entire world, and the returning Jesus will validate the Mahdi's claim to be Allah's true representative. The Mahdi's rule, during which he will convert the entire world to Islam by force when necessary, will last for seven years. See titles by Cantrell, Jones, Jeffery and Livingston in the bibliography. A web search will also provide the reader with a superabundance of information on the Mahdi.

Future News:

Watch for Iraq, Syria and possibly Lebanon and Turkey to unite in a revived "Assyria."

king of Babylon, convincingly claiming to be the Mahdi, could unite the Shiite populations of several nations in the fertile crescent without alienating the Sunnis. This would allow for a union between Iraq and Syria, and the birth of a revived "Assyrian Empire." While the Scriptures do not require this development, the reemergence of an Assyrian state would ratify the statements of the prophets that refer to the Antichrist as "the Assyrian" (Isa 14.24-27; Mic 5.05-06).

Whichever nations unite with the king of Babylon, we know that at least ten other kings will submit their authority to his in order to more effectively pursue their mutual *antichristian* ambitions (Rev 17.12-17). The New Testament word *king* (Grk *basilevs*) cannot be limited to exclude presidents or prime ministers, but we may see actual kings arise in the Middle East to fulfill this prophecy very literally. Six kings currently reign in the region, ruling respectively over Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Oman, Saudi Arabia and Qatar. Whether these or others join the End-Time federation, the Beast will unite a more powerful Empire than that of Saladin or any Ottoman Sultan.

At last, with his power consolidated, and even Jerusalem and Israel temporarily subdued, the Beast will turn his attention to the Great Prostitute, Mystery Babylon — Rome. The Beast will finally buck the Great Prostitute off his back and devour her as she falls. How he with his 10 horns will "bring her to ruin and leave her naked; eat her flesh and burn her with fire," God knows. The first part of this prediction suggests the possibility that the federation of the Beast may bring Rome to financial ruin before they physically destroy her. To "eat her flesh" suggests that her enemies somehow consume her assets before she is gone. Be that as it may, we know that the Beast and the ten horns will finally destroy her with fire (Rev 17.16; 18.08), in such a way that she will "never be found again" (Rev 18.21). Every sound of habitation will go silent in the place she once sat, and her every earthly light will go dark (Rev 18.22-23). What so many science fiction movies have portrayed in post-apocalyptic stories, great cities totally silenced except for the occasional rasp of a windblown sign, will become a reality where Rome, Italy once stood except that not even the street signs will be left. The Great Prostitute, Mystery Babylon, will completely disappear — but not before she, like the Amorites of old, has filled up the full measure of her iniquity (cf. Gen 15.16).



Rome,
Italy, will
completely
disappear...

THE PROSTITUTE'S TWO GREAT SINS

The Plague of Human Trafficking

The Great Prostitute's first great crime will not be commerce, but *commercialism*, the worship of material profit and luxury. There is much honest and legitimate commerce in the world, but as we often remind one another, it is not *money* but *the love of money* that is the "root of all evil" (1Ti 6.10, KJV).⁵⁹ In the End-Time idolatry the spirit of commercialism and the pursuit of self-indulgence will so inflame Europe that she will even sacrifice human beings to satisfy her lust. She will not burn people on the altar's of Moloch, but rather oppress them in an ever more blatant slave trade. Part of the message of this vision of the Great Prostitute is that while commerce is fine, there are certain things we must never sell. One is our integrity, and another is our fellow human being.⁶⁰

Skeptics have occasionally criticized the Bible for promoting slavery, but the Bible does no such thing. God forbade that his people be sold as slaves (Lev 25.42); far less could an Israelite kidnap one of his people to sell him or her as a slave (Deu 24.17). Nor could God's people sell a captive of war once they had taken such a person into their household (Deu 21.14). Nor were they to return a runaway slave to the slave's master (Deu 23.15-16)! An Israelite could sell himself into servitude, but this was a voluntary means of addressing poverty or debt, and he could only be hired in this way for a maximum of 6 years (Deu 15.12; Jer 07.14). Rather than promoting slavery, God condemns the oppression of slavery and will judge nations (like Gaza) for selling slaves (Amo 1.06), and will punish individuals (like the Antichrist) for holding captives (Isa 14.17). When the Mediterranean world again sells Jewish boys and girls into bondage for the international sex trade, the wrath of almighty God will not delay (Joe 3.01-03).

And yet, Europe will increasingly trade in "the bodies and souls of men" (Rev 18.13).⁶¹ This "commodity" appears at the very end — the Hebraic position of emphasis — of the recitation of cargoes for which the ruined merchants mourn (Rev 18.11-13). In this way, the Holy Spirit assures us that it is not "about oxen that God is concerned"; the Revelation intentionally draws our attention to this final item of the cargo manifest. The merchants will trade in "gold, silver, ... cattle, and sheep," and so far as Europe consumes these things in self-indulgence she will be culpable, but it is for her trade in human beings that God will hasten her judgment.

We currently define slavery as "labor without pay, enforced by threat of violence." The 1927 Slavery Convention officially abolished slavery worldwide, but human bondage not only continues throughout our world but thrives, thanks to "the complicity of some governments

Future News:

Watch for the acceleration of human trafficking, particularly into Europe through Italy.

⁵⁹ See footnote 54 above.

⁶⁰ Cf. Pro 23.23.

⁶¹ "Bodies and souls of men" is a hendiadys reflecting both the Greek (*bodies*) and Hebrew (*souls*) idioms for slaves. See Beale p. 910.

and the ignorance of much of the world.” Internationally, over 27 million people now suffer the oppression of slavery — more than at any other time in history.⁶² Today’s slaves are forced to serve as domestic servants, as manual laborers, or as prostitutes. We currently have one million illegal slaves in our own country, the United States of America.⁶³ Theresa Loar, director of the Inter-Agency Council On Women, calls slavery “the fastest-growing criminal enterprise, behind guns and drugs, in this country.”⁶⁴

Almost all of the slaves currently in the United States were *trafficked*, i.e., smuggled in illegally and often under false pretences, from developing countries. The motive of the traffickers is of course material profit. According to *Mission Frontiers*, the July-August 2007 issue, “Experts estimate trafficking in the US yields \$9 billion every year.” *Mission Frontiers* also reports that “the trade of human flesh is so lucrative that authorities [no sooner] close in on one smuggling ring in the US, [than] another one pops up.” The same source mentions that Former Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, called human trafficking “the fastest growing criminal enterprise in the world.”⁶⁵

Internationally, “600,000 to 800,000 people are trafficked ... every year [and] approximately 80% of them are women and children.”⁶⁶ In Europe, the end of Soviet hegemony and the subsequent opening of borders within the EU has resulted in an explosive upsurge of human trafficking. Perhaps 400,000 people now enter the EU illegally every year.⁶⁷ “Many of those smuggled in are Afghans, Albanians, Kurds, Bangladeshis, Iraqis and, increasingly, Chinese. ... Europol says gangs are making as much from human trafficking as they are from drug smuggling.”⁶⁸ Just as in the apostle John’s time, sea captains are getting rich by this trade (Rev 18.17-19). According to reporter Molly Moore:



Smugglers who once organized groups of two or three dozen people for bus, truck or small boat transport have begun packing hundreds of people into the holds of dilapidated fishing and cargo ships for treacherous ocean journeys.

Just a year ago, discoveries of foundering ships jammed with human cargo of 500 to 1,000 people would have been a novelty that generated headlines and outrage across Europe. Now they have become routine in the waters between Turkey and destinations in Greece, Italy and as far north as the French Riviera. The human cargo carriers — aging, barely seaworthy boats — often become deathtraps for passengers who have paid \$1,500 to \$3,000 for cramped squatting space in dank, airless holds with little to eat, no sanitation facilities and no life vests or boats....

Turkish officials said arrests of people connected to human smuggling have risen from 98 three years ago to 850 last year, although they were charged with lesser crimes because *Turkey has no law against human smuggling*.

The number of illegal immigrants detained by Turkish authorities nearly doubled from just under 48,000 in 1999 to 94,000 in 2000.⁶⁹ (Emphasis added.)

62 *Focus On The Family*, November 2007.

63 “Slavery’s New Face,” *Newsweek*, December 18, 2000.

64 Ibid.

65 “The Global Slave Trade” *Mission Frontiers* July-August 2007, p. 11.

66 Some groups estimate the total number of people smuggled annually across international borders at 4 million. <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,1564,1335876,00.html>.

67 Hagler, Tom; “Trafficking: A Human Tragedy,” June 19, 2000.

68 Ibid. Legal penalties are less for human trafficking than for drug trafficking, so expect a continuing boom of the former.

69 Moore, Molly; “Human Smuggling Is Big Business,” May 28, 2001, *The Washington Post*.

Turkey's indecisive attitude toward human trafficking is something we'll want to keep our eye on, but in connection with our present topic, let us look more closely at Italy. According to the 2005 EU Organized Crime Report, "With regards to Italy, recent research estimates the annual number of [human trafficking] victims at over 5,000 with annual profits from the sale and sexual exploitation of women ranging from EUR 380 to EUR 950 Million (\$450 Million to \$1.25 Billion)."⁷⁰ In January 2007, more than 2,000 people were accused of running a human trafficking ring in Italy.⁷¹

The U. S. State Department reports that,

Italy is a transit and destination country for women, children and men trafficked for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor. Most victims are women and children from Nigeria, Romania, Moldova, Albania, and Ukraine though in smaller numbers there are also victims from Russia, Bulgaria, Latin America, North and East Africa, the Middle East, and China. Children constitute 7 to 10 percent of victims. There has been an increase in Romanian minors trafficked to Italy for sexual exploitation, an unintended consequence of a EU-mandated closure of Romanian orphanages. The number of Roma children trafficked for forced begging has also risen. Men from Poland and the P.R.C. are trafficked to Italy for forced labor, mostly in the agricultural sector. — U.S. State Dept Trafficking in Persons Report, June, 2007⁷²

Unlike Turkey, "Italy prohibits all forms of trafficking in persons through its 2003 *Measures Against Trafficking in Persons* law," and prescribes a "penalty of 8 to 20 years' imprisonment for all forms of trafficking."⁷³ Also, the Italian government has "sustained strong efforts to protect trafficking victims.... The government spent 4.3 million euros (\$5.82 million) on victim assistance in 2006, financing 77 [Non-Government Organization] projects to provide legal services, health care, and counseling to 7,300 women trafficking victims."⁷⁴ Furthermore, the Government of Italy endeavors "to educate the Italian public about trafficking," and has helped NGOs continue "to raise awareness using government-funded materials, including brochures, posters, and TV and radio ads about trafficking."⁷⁵ I thank God for these commendable efforts in Italy! Sadly, the Revelation predicts that the scene will change, and whether officially or covertly, Rome will yield again to the *irresistibly lucrative* trade in "the bodies and souls of men."

But this will not be Rome's *only* End-Time sin.

The Blood Of The Saints

As we've already noted, John observed with dismay that the Great Prostitute was "drunk with the blood of the saints" (Rev 17.06). With all the references in the Revelation to the persecution and even martyrdom of saints, apostles and prophets, there are precious few clues as to *why* these saints endure such hostility. Jesus attributes the trials of the Smyrna church to "the devil" (Rev 02.10), but does not mention the human impetus. Only from history do we know that Smyrna was a center of emperor worship and that Christians were persecuted for refusing to burn the annual pinch of incense to the "god Caesar." Looking to the future, Revelation 16.02-07 implies that it is the Beast-worshippers who will persecute Christians to the death. However, the Great Prostitute is neither a deified emperor nor

70 EUROPOL, "2005 EU Organised Crime Report," October 25, 2005, pg. 16, <http://www.statewatch.org/news/2005/oct/europol-org-crim-public.pdf>. (Accessed: March 26, 2007).

71 Associated Press, "More than 2,000 accused in human trafficking investigation," International Herald Tribune, January 24, 2007, <http://www.ihl.com/articles/ap/2007/01/24/europe/EU-GEN-Italy-Human-Trafficking.php>, (accessed: January 25, 2007).

72 <http://gvnet.com/humantrafficking/Italy.htm>

73 <http://gvnet.com/humantrafficking/Italy-2.htm>

74 Ibid.

75 Ibid.

subject to the Beast; why will *she* persecute the saints? Why will God judge her for the way she treated them (Rev 18.20)? Why will so much blood of prophets and saints be found in her (Rev 18.24)?

To clarify, we must ask further: Should we perhaps take these references to the Great Prostitute's persecution of the saints as historical rather than predictive? Does her culpability for the blood of prophets and saints have only to do with John's time? Will her future judgment be only retroactive with respect to her treatment of God's people? We could almost interpret the vision this way, for Rome's historical persecution of the saints in the early centuries certainly suffices as a basis for the guilt assigned to her in the Revelation. However, John saw her "drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus" *while she sat on the Beast*. Since the Beast has not yet arisen, this implies that the Great Prostitute will yet persecute God's people *in the time* of her rivalry with Antichrist's federation. Furthermore, while God will judge the Great Prostitute for her various sins that "corrupted the earth," the Revelation particularly connects her future judgment with her treatment of the saints: "Rejoice, saints and prophets! God has judged her for the way she treated you. ... He has avenged on her the blood of his servants" (Rev 18.20; 19.02). These pointed declarations make it unlikely that the Great Prostitute's future judgment will fall upon her for persecutions of ages long past. It appears that there will yet occur a fierce confrontation between Rome and the people of God. Evangelical Christians in the West who have so worried about the coming persecution under Antichrist and his beastly empire of the East, should concern themselves instead with the coming persecution *and deception* by the Great Prostitute in Europe!

Why then will she persecute the saints? The Revelation does not tell us explicitly, but the vision of the Great Prostitute is all about her corrupting commercialism, and a true Christian ethic has always come into conflict with this form of idolatry. The formula for confrontation is simple: Commercialism prioritizes money over people, and Christianity prioritizes people over money.

Remember the story about Jesus casting a legion of demons into swine. Why did the



owners of the swine beg Jesus to leave their region? Because the swine had drowned themselves, and the owners were more concerned about their economic loss than about their countrymen who needed deliverance. Why were the Sadducees bent on destroying Jesus after He disrupted their temple market? Because they were concerned about money while Jesus was concerned about the needs of the worshippers. Why were Paul and Silas flogged and thrown into prison in Philippi? Because they had exorcised a slave girl of her soothsaying demon, and "the owners of the slave girl realized that their hope of making money was gone" (Act 16.19). Why was it that "there arose a great disturbance about the [Jesus] Way" in Ephesus (Act 19.23)? Because the makers and sellers of goddess idols received "a good income from this business" and perceived in Christianity "a danger ... that our trade will lose its good name" (Act 19.25 ff).

Jesus and His followers have always gotten in the way of immoral monetary gain. But if they hindered the sale of goddess images, will they not all the more rise up and impede the sale of human beings? Yes! The day of William Wilberforce is not over yet! The gross commercial sin of the Great Prostitute is trafficking in the “bodies and souls of men” (Rev 18.13), and the Church is even now mobilizing to fight her over this. David Batstone quotes Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice as saying, “Defeating human trafficking is a great moral calling of our time,”⁷⁶ and I believe Christians will answer this call.

When Christians get in her way, the Great Prostitute will show her Jezebel character (2Ki 09.07). As Jezebel slaughtered the Lord’s servants who stood in the way of her religious and political ambitions, so End-Time Rome will spill the blood of saints and prophets who speak out against her economic oppressions and human trafficking. But God’s justice will not delay. God will bring the Beast to burn the Great Prostitute with fire, and her demise will signal the fulfillment of the final verse of the Song of Moses (Deu 32.43):

Rejoice, O nations, with his people, for he will avenge the blood of his servants; he will take vengeance on his enemies and make atonement for his land and people.

ESCAPING THE HONEY TRAP: EXITING MYSTERY BABYLON

Why I Don’t Want To Believe This Prophecy

It breaks my heart to think of Rome’s annihilation. I wish the physical location itself could be spared along with the righteous who flee the city’s judgment, because Rome is an architectural wonder and houses some of the greatest works of art of all time. No one who has an eye for beauty would want to see this city wiped off the map. Furthermore, the Vatican Library houses vast quantities of the most precious documents in the world, so far as the Christian faith is concerned, and under Rome’s streets run 500 miles of Christian history embedded in the ancient catacombs, those subterranean corridors where persecuted Christians once hid and worshipped. Rome is a city of priceless treasures. I’ve long hoped to visit Rome, and still plan to do so.

Nevertheless, I am convinced of the interpretation I have given above of the vision of the “Great Prostitute.” Just as God would *not forgive* Jerusalem in Nebuchadnezzar’s time because Manasseh “had filled Jerusalem with innocent blood” (2Ki 24.03-04), so God will not forgive Rome in the time of the Beast, because the Great Prostitute will have made herself culpable for rivers of innocent blood. Rome must utterly vanish, for her streets and buildings, plazas and fountains will soon have become irremediably polluted ground. I mourn the thought!

However, I console myself with the knowledge that the time is coming when, because of new heavenly glories, we won’t even remember *the Ark of the Covenant* (Isa 65.17; Jer 03.16), let alone Michelangelo’s David or the Sistine Chapel. God’s plan is holy and good, and we will acknowledge the rightness of it as we see it unfold. Still, confidence in the rightness of the vision doesn’t make it any more palatable, nor any less counterintuitive in view of current geopolitical realities.

76 “Finding Slavery In My Own Backyard,” *Mission Frontiers*, July-August 2007, p. 12.

Why This Prophecy Is Counterintuitive

No one today expects the city of Rome to become Europe's financial nerve center. Italy remains one of the most politically and economically backward states in the EU, in part because the Mafia continues to undermine her infrastructure. Italian journalist Roberto Saviano reported on March 13, 2008, that "the Sicilian Mafia ... currently reign[s] over one-third of Italy's territory, infiltrating entire sectors of the above-board economy —

transportation, hospitals, construction, fashion, supermarkets, agriculture — like a cancer to which no part of the nation is immune." In his article, "Maimed By The Mob," Saviano continued, "Too many elections in Italy are won, even today, by the time-tested process of buying votes. ... a political system so prone to manipulation and myopia is incompatible with an advanced democracy."⁷⁷ So even Italy's own people have little hope that the nation will iron out its political and economic problems any time soon. Far less does the rest of Europe expect Rome to become the capital city of the continent's economy! Still, the Revelation's vision of the Great Prostitute predicts it.

So, I neither want to accept this vision nor do I find it easy to believe. Nevertheless, when it comes to interpreting Bible prophecy our desires and intuitions about the future are hardly decisive. God has fulfilled unwelcome and counterintuitive prophecies before, and God will fulfill this vision of the Great Prostitute (whether or not He does so precisely in the way I've interpreted). No, we need not concern ourselves with the probability — and far less with the desirability — of the vision's fulfillment, but we must *apply its message*.

"Come Out Of Her, My People!" (Rev 18.04)

The primary message of Rev 17.01 to 19.04 is simply *to come out of Mystery Babylon!* Unfortunately, much of the evangelical church has failed to heed this call due to our misinterpretation of Mystery Babylon as "Roman Catholicism." We evangelicals have nothing to do with Catholicism (most of the time), so the prophecy of The Great Prostitute, when understood as speaking of the pope or his religion, seems irrelevant. It's quite another thing, though, when we realize that the Great Prostitute/Babylon the Great is the queen of luxurious self-indulgence and *we have already come under her sway*.

It makes my heart ache to say it, but the influence of the Great Prostitute pervades not just the evangelical segment but *the whole* of the Western Church. We know this by how often we Christians, individually and corporately, prioritize things over people. Historically, the Christian faith of a community has grown inversely with its material prosperity, and Western culture has long lolled at that part of the cycle in which material prosperity is high and faith is low. Sadly, this general trend of the culture influences the Western Church more powerfully than the Church influences the culture. We Christians are constantly enticed to love money rather than people, and we *fall* to the temptation more often than we realize.

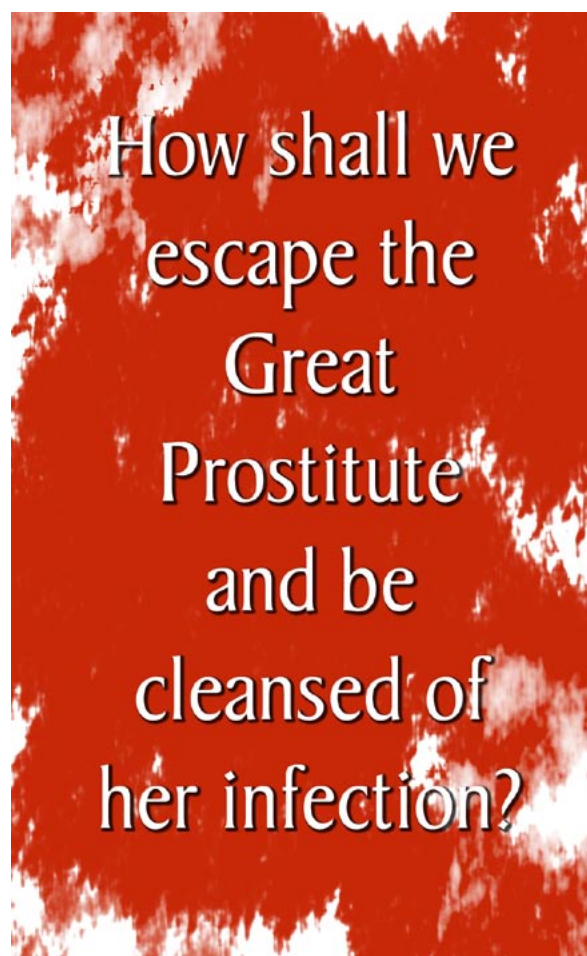
Future News:

Watch for Italy to advance
its economic ascendancy
in Europe by détente with
its mafias.

⁷⁷ Saviano is a author of the book *Gomorrah*, an exposé of Mob activity in Naples. He now lives under police protection

Honestly, do we seek first the Kingdom of God (Mat 6.33), or do we busy ourselves with our own temporal empires? Do we grow disciples, or only augment our bank accounts? Do we work for the success of our employees and friends, or do we use them to advance our own agendas? Do we share the things of God freely with all who hunger and thirst for righteousness, or do we engage in ministry as “a means to financial gain” (1Ti 6.05)? Do we practice pure religion, as defined by James, caring for the orphan and widow (Jam 1.27)? Indeed, can we really claim to know God, when God defines “what it means to know Me” as “defending the cause of the poor and the needy” (Jer 22.16)? Or have we slipped into complacency about the widows and the struggling single moms in our neighborhoods?⁷⁸ Have we closed our eyes to the abortions and the illegal enslavements occurring in our cities? Father have mercy! I fear that the spirit of Mystery Babylon has ensnared me and my friends, and that we have unwittingly begun to embrace the ethic of the Great Prostitute.

Help! How shall we extricate ourselves from this honeytrap that Satan has prepared to neutralize the Church of these Last Days? How shall we escape the clutches of the Great



Prostitute and be cleansed of her infection? How can we escape when her deception and corruption penetrates to the very hearts of her victims? As the apostle said, “Thanks be to God — through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (Rom 07.25). Christ’s blood, His Word and His Spirit will prevail, and “if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed” (Joh 08.36). By God’s grace, we renounce the Great Prostitute, and will grow up instead into the pure and spotless Bride, dressed in the righteous works that “God prepared in advance for us to do” (Eph 2.10; Rev 19.07-08). Hallelujah! We repent of loving money and using people.

But what does renouncing the Great Prostitute look like, practically speaking? How shall we go about eliminating the lingering odor of Mystery Babylon’s perfume from our lives, and how shall we avoid re-entanglement in her tentacle arms? The fight against Mammon, against Babylon’s spirit and religion, is an ongoing battle requiring constant vigilance and “the full armor of God” (Eph 6.10 ff.). You, dear reader, are already a veteran of this warfare, and I cannot give you — nor do you need — a weapon other than those already given us by our Lord Jesus. However, I can share some practical insights that have helped me in the struggle:

The Problem Is Commercialism Not Commerce

As already emphasized, the Great Prostitute’s crime and snare is not commerce, but *Commercialism*. Commerce is the legitimate, large-scale pursuit of trade and profit. Every

⁷⁸ Someone has commented that in our culture single moms are the new “widows” and their children the new “orphans.”

honest worker has at least an indirect connection to commerce. The Bible mandates that we work and engage in legitimate business in order to provide for our families (1Ti 5.8). However, while commerce is a legitimate pursuit, *Commercialism* is an attitude of the heart that can grow into the religion of Mammon worship. *Commercialism* is the *love of money and luxury* that seeps into our psyches, hardening our hearts to needy people and distracting our minds from all the priorities of God's kingdom. Just as the Soviet Empire in times past endeavored to bring down western agents by entangling them with prostitutes, so the Satanic Empire has endeavored to neutralize the western Church by entangling our hearts with this religious love of material luxury.

So, our renunciation of Mystery Babylon the Great and our repentance of her sins is a repentance of this *Commercialism*. Repentance involves a "turning away" and of necessity a "turning toward." To more fully *turn away* from Mystery Babylon, we must more fully *turn toward* our Lord Jesus, and in this case turning toward Jesus means embracing and living out His kind of love. Remember that *Commercialism's* creed is greed. Greed uses people to win things, but love uses things to win people (Luk 16.9). To turn and walk in the opposite spirit from Mystery Babylon means to walk in love, in Jesus-quality love (1Jo 2.06).

Jesus Quality Love

1 John 3.16 says, "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers." At first glance, this seems like a most impractical exhortation. Jesus died for us, but how often can we die for someone else? Only once, right? And in our culture, what are the odds that we will ever be called upon to throw ourselves in front of a bus, or otherwise sacrifice our life, for someone?

Upon reflection, of course, we realize that John's words do not call us to a one-time act, but to a *lifestyle* of laying down our lives for our brothers. To love with Jesus-quality love, means to *daily* lay down our lives for one another (cf. Luk 09.23; 1Co 15.31), but how does one do this?

I have puzzled over this question, but I've finally concluded that laying down my life for my brothers means committing to a certain set of priorities for daily life. The priorities derive from the examples of Jesus and His followers, and I state them in *your-my* form:

Your life outweighs my safety.
Your basic needs outweigh my prosperity.
Your eternity outweighs my temporal agenda.
Your need for family outweighs my independence.
Your fruitfulness for the Kingdom outweighs my convenience.

Your Life Outweighs My Safety

The first of these priorities addresses the rarely required "throw yourself in front of a bus" scenario. Yes, Jesus-quality love does require that we literally sacrifice our lives if necessary to save the life of another. I've had to consciously make this choice only once in my life, when I saved a drowning Israeli friend. Since I'm a weak swimmer and have no life-guard training, I feared that I would drown in the attempt to help my friend, and yet I was the only one near him and I could not remain passive while he perished. Happily, we both survived, but the experience marked us, and we both know Jesus in a little deeper way because of it.

Your Basic Needs Outweigh My Prosperity

The second priority, which places greater importance upon the material needs of others than upon our own prosperity, should affect our lives more often. It is not a directive to give *all* our possessions away for the sake of the poor, though the Lord will occasionally ask individuals to do that (Mar 10.21), but rather a commitment to share from our store of goods and not hold fast to abundance as an end in itself. The first-century believers zealously embraced this commitment (Act 02.44-45), but we have difficulty implementing it. I know that I and my friends are *willing* to share from our abundance, but we do so infrequently because (unintentionally or not) we have been buffered from the poor. We live in middle-class or upper middle-class neighborhoods, and attend churches of the same demographic. We would *happily* help the poor, but we rarely bump into them!

I fear this excuse will not satisfy the Lord (Mat 25.44-45). The Holy Spirit is urging the Western Church to get back in touch with the “hidden” poor of our land, to serve them without strings attached and to share our abundance in Jesus’ name. Therefore, Jesus-quality love will compel some of us, individually or corporately, to reach out to poorer neighborhoods or homeless hangouts with an intentional and long-term commitment.⁷⁹

Your Eternity Outweighs My Temporal Agenda

The third priority of Jesus-quality love will involve the subordinating of our discretionary time (i.e., *luxury time*) to the spiritual needs of our unbelieving neighbors. If our neighbors live next door, this priority will compel us to invest time in relationship-building that we might rather spend on our own projects. If our neighbors live in northern India, this priority will prompt us to spend time on our missions committee, or on traveling with a ministry team, or on supporting active missionaries in some other way. This priority deeply informed the life of Jesus who rejected the temporal offers of Satan (Mat 04.08-10) in order to eternally redeem others. It also spurred the apostles to the furthest reaches of their world with the gospel. The followers of Jesus knew that they could *spend all of their time* working for the salvation of others without *losing any of their time* because they would still come out winners in the resurrection (1Co 15.19,58). Obviously, this third priority of Jesus-quality love will compel us to invest some of our discretionary time in prayer.

Your Need For Family Outweighs My Independence

The fourth priority of Jesus-quality love chafes our inclination to independence. I’m a loner by personality and an independent American by nationality, but biblical faith is corporate to the core. There is “one body” (Eph 4.04), not countless “lone rangers.” The Lord not only expects His body to live in unity, but also to draw others into itself by the demonstration of this unity (Joh 17.20-23). Both the unity and its demonstration occurs in large measure through acts of *hospitality*. Over the centuries, the Church (at least within its various denominations) has slipped into expressing unity primarily through creeds, but this was not the way of the first-century Church. I highly value the truths and insights expressed in the historic creeds, and I appreciate the cost at which doctrinal confessions were hammered out by theologians and Reformers, but the creed of the first Christians was simple: “Jesus is Lord!” (Rom 10.09; Phi 2.11). While such a confession had a unifying effect among those who declared it, “talk was cheap” in the early church just as it is now (1Co 04.20). Authentic unity was, and must

⁷⁹ *The Crossing Church* in Tacoma is a pace-setter in this kind of ministry to the poor and homeless. Please visit <http://www.crossingchurchtacoma.org/Home/>.

be, lived out among people who remain in proximity for more time than it takes to recite a doctrinal statement or attend a service. Real unity occurs among people who share life together. Therefore, hospitality was a mandate of the early church (Rom 12.13; 1Ti 5.10; Heb 13.02; 3Jo 1.08), and remains a priority of Jesus-quality love in the Church today.

Thanks in large part to the example set by my hospitable mother, Kaaren and I have hosted dozens of overnight or longer-term guests in our home over the years. The roster of our extended-stay house guests has included church friends, ministry colleagues, traveling missionaries, needy young people, Muslim and other international students, and homeless people. Often challenging, and sometimes risky, our little hospitality ministry over the years has taught us invaluable lessons, deepened our character and enlarged our children's understanding of the world and of the Great Commission. The practice of hospitality has made it possible to share our Christian testimony with people from countries closed to the gospel! We wouldn't trade our investment in hospitality for anything, but it has required a conscious subsuming of our independent agendas into the greater priority of expressing the reality of God's family, the one body of Christ, to one another and to the world.

Your Fruitfulness For The Kingdom Outweighs My Convenience

The final priority of Jesus-quality love is the commitment to discipleship, the central mandate of the Great Commission as recorded in Mat 28.18-20. To "make disciples" is to mentor others into a mature relationship with Christ, whereby they become spiritually fruitful. This discipleship, like unity, only occurs authentically with prolonged proximity. Some discipleship can happen on the church campus, but more will happen in believers' homes (see Act 20.20). So again, "lay[ing] down our lives for our brothers" will require acts of hospitality and will impinge upon our time, our convenience and our material assets.

There is no escaping the costliness of Jesus-quality love, but it is this very costliness that helps us escape from the honeytrap. We can love God and people or we can love the Great Prostitute and *all our stuff*. The more we give up the sovereignty over all our stuff (Luk 14.33; cf. Mar 08.34-36), the more we distance ourselves from the clutches of the Great Prostitute and her god of Mammon. Let's do it. Let's get out of Mystery Babylon and take our friends with us! Ω



APPENDIX 1

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITERS ON THE FALL OF BABYLONS EAST AND WEST

Identification of Rome As "Babylon"

Tertullian (c. AD 155-230) wrote:

9.140 For this, again, is no novelty to the Divine Scriptures, figuratively to use a transference of *name* grounded on parallelism of *crimes*. For it 141 calls your rulers "rulers of Sodom," and your people the "people of Gomorrah," 142 when those cities had already long been extinct. 143 And elsewhere it says, through a prophet, to the people of Israel, "Thy father (was) an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite;" 144 of whose race they were not begotten, but (were called their sons) by reason of their consimilarity in impiety, whom of old (God) had called *His own sons* through Isaiah the prophet: "I have generated and exalted sons." 145 So, too, Egypt is sometimes understood to mean the whole world 146 in that prophet, on the count of superstition and malediction. 147 So, again, Babylon, in our own John, is a figure of the city Rome, as being equally great and proud of her sway, and triumphant over the saints.⁸⁰

Again the same author said,

By a similar usage Babylon also in our (St.) John is a figure of the city of Rome, as being like (Babylon) great and proud in royal power, and warring down the saints of God.⁸¹

Hippolytus [A.D. 170–236.] also used the name Babylon in connection with the Roman devastation of Jerusalem:

30. Come, then, O blessed Isaiah; arise, tell us clearly what thou didst prophesy with respect to the mighty Babylon. For thou didst speak also of Jerusalem, and thy word is accomplished. For thou didst speak boldly and openly: "Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire; your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate as overthrown by many strangers. The daughter of Sion shall be left as a cottage in a vineyard, and as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city." What then? Are not these things come to pass? Are not the things announced by thee fulfilled? Is not their country, Judea, desolate? Is not the holy place burned with fire? Are not their walls cast down? Are not their cities destroyed? Their land, do not strangers devour it? Do not the Romans rule the country? And indeed these impious people hated thee, and did saw thee asunder, and they crucified Christ. Thou art dead in the world, but thou livest in Christ.⁸²

Hippolytus shows definitely what he means by *Babylon* in section 36 of the same work:

36. For he sees, when in the isle Patmos, a revelation of awful mysteries, which he recounts freely, and makes known to others. Tell me, blessed John, apostle and disciple of the Lord, what didst thou

80 *Answer To The Jews*, ch. 9.

81 *Against Marcion*, Book 3, Ch. 13.

82 *Treatise on Christ and Antichrist*.

see and hear concerning Babylon? Arise, and speak; for it sent thee also into banishment.⁸³

So, Hippolytus gives the name *Babylon* to the entity that banished John to Patmos. That entity was of course *Rome*.

The Coming Fall of Roman “Babylon”

Then in the third century, an anonymous Christian author added an appendix to *The Fourth Book Of Ezra*.⁸⁴ This author describes clashing armies with the metaphor of raging storms that arise from different compass points. He says, “the winds from the east shall prevail ... and the tempest that was to cause destruction by the east wind shall be driven violently toward the south and west. And great and mighty clouds, full of wrath and tempest, shall rise, to destroy all the earth ... And they shall destroy cities, and walls, mountains and hills, trees of the forests, grass of the meadows, and their grain. And they shall go on steadily to Babylon, and shall destroy her. They shall come to her and surround her; they shall pour out the tempest and all its wrath upon her; then the dust and smoke shall go up to heaven, and all who are about her shall wail over her” (4 Ezra 15.34-45).

That the prevailing storm arises *from* the East and “shall go on steadily to Babylon” implies that Babylon West, i.e., Rome is in view. This becomes more definite in the following verses that describe [the Roman province of] Asia, i.e., western Asia Minor, as on the route of the return trip from the devastation of Babylon:

And you, O Asia, who share in the glamour of Babylon and the glory of her person — woe to you, miserable wretch! For you have made yourself like her; you have decked out your daughters in harlotry to please and glory in your lovers, who have always lusted after you. You have imitated that hateful harlot in all her deeds and devices; therefore God says, “I will send evils upon you, widowhood, poverty, famine, sword, and pestilence, to lay waste your houses and bring you to destruction and death. And the glory of your power shall wither like a flower, when the heat rises that is sent upon you. You shall be weakened like a wretched woman who is beaten and wounded, so that you cannot receive your mighty lovers. Would I have dealt with you so violently,” says the Lord, “if you had not always killed my chosen people, exulting and clapping your hands and talking about their death when you were drunk? Trick out the beauty of your face! The reward of a harlot is in your bosom, therefore you shall receive your recompense. As you will do to my chosen people,” says the Lord, “so God will do to you, and will hand you over to adversities. Your children will die of hunger, and you shall fall by the sword, and your cities shall be wiped out, and all your people who are in the open country shall fall by the sword. And those who are in the mountains and highlands shall perish of hunger, and they shall eat their own flesh in hunger for bread and drink their own blood in thirst for water. Unhappy above all others, you shall come and suffer fresh afflictions. And as they pass they shall wreck the hateful city, and shall destroy a part of your land and abolish a portion of your glory, as they return from devastated Babylon. And you shall be broken down by them like stubble, and they shall be like fire to you. And they shall devour you and your cities, and your land and your mountains; they shall burn with fire all your forests and your fruitful trees. They shall carry your children away captive, and shall plunder your wealth, and abolish the glory of your countenance.” (4 Ezra 15.46-63.)

Then, lest we confuse the Babylon in view with the tiny village that existed in Mesopotamia

83 Ibid.

84 An English translation is available in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Vol. I* edited by Charlesworth.

at the time, the next chapter of the Fourth Ezra appendix, 4 Ezra 16.01-03, opens with an exclamation that distinguishes Babylon and the province of Asia in the west from Egypt and Syria in the south and east: “Woe to you, Babylon and Asia! Woe to you, Egypt and Syria! Gird yourselves with sackcloth and haircloth, and wail for your children, and lament for them; for your destruction is at hand. The sword has been sent upon you, and who is there to turn it back?” This is remarkable: a third-century Christian writer understood not only that Rome — the harlot Babylon — would be destroyed, but that she would be destroyed by an invasion from the East which would also devastate much of Asia Minor!

Victorinus of Petovium (d. c. 304) also understood the harlot as Rome and commented on Rev 07.02 saying, “Therefore in the trumpets and phials is signified either the desolation of the plagues that are sent upon the earth, or the madness of Antichrist himself, or the cutting off of the peoples, or the diversity of the plagues, or the hope in the kingdom of the saints, or the ruin of states, or the great overthrow of Babylon, that is, the Roman state.”⁸⁵ Again, commenting on Rev 17.02, Victorinus wrote, “all the saints have suffered martyrdom because of the decree of the Senate of this city, and although tolerance is proclaimed, it is she who has given to all nations every law against the preaching of the faith.”⁸⁶

Likewise, Oecumenius (6th century) commented on the vision of Rev 17 and 18, saying “the vision now reveals to the Evangelist [John] what will befall Rome. ... But how will these kings lay waste to Rome, for we see that the Revelation depicts it so? Perhaps it will be the object of warfare among the kings...”⁸⁷

We cannot, then, be accused of novelty for proposing that Rev 17.01-19.04 predicts the apocalyptic devastation of the city of Rome. Christian commentators, both before and after the fall of Rome at the hands of the Visigoths in AD 410, understood the Scriptures to confirm this final fall of the so-called “eternal city.”

85 Roberts and Donaldson; *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*.

86 *Commentary On The Apocalypse*, quoted in Weinrich, p. 266.

87 Ibid., pp. 266, 280.

APPENDIX 2

THE ALEXANDRIAN SIBYL ON THE COMING RUINATION OF BABYLONS EAST AND WEST

A dozen different cities of the ancient world boasted of having their own Sibyl. The Sibyls were women supposedly thousands of years old; one was said to be the daughter (or daughter-in-law) of Noah. These aged women uttered ecstatic prophecies that were recorded as inspired oracles and carefully guarded in their respective temples.

Today we have a body of literature called the *Sibylline Oracles* that comprise part of the *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. The pseudepigrapha are writings of a generally religious nature and that often purport to have been written by some famous biblical personality such as Enoch, etc. The *Sibylline Oracles* purport to contain the famous prophecies of the Sibyls, but it is impossible to know what part if any of these extant writings actually originated with one of the shrunken old women in the famous oracular temples. The *Sibylline Oracles*, as we currently have them, apparently originated in various parts of the Mediterranean world between the second century BC and the seventh century AD.

Of interest to us in this appendix are two passages in the *Oracles*, from books 3 and 5 respectively, that seem to have come from Jewish authors in Alexandria Egypt. The first of these passages appears to have been written around 150 BC:

Sibyl. 3.301 how many grievous woes the Eternal has devised for Babylon, 302 because it sacked His great temple. 303 Woe unto thee Babylon and race of Assyrian men, a rushing destruction is coming one day upon the whole land of the sinners, 304 -- 305 and a crash shall destroy the whole country of men, 306 even the scourge of the Mighty God [the inspirer of my strains]. 307 For from the air from above there shall come to thee Babylon 308 (yea from heaven there shall come down to thee from the Holy Place) 309 and to the children of wrath eternal perdition. 310 And then thou shalt be as thou wast before as though thou hadst not been born. 311 And then thou shalt be surfeited with blood, as formerly thou thyself 312 didst spill the blood of good men and just, 313 whose blood even now cries unto the farthest heaven.⁸⁸

This passage from book 3 announces the utter destruction of Mesopotamian Babylon. The mention of the “race of Assyrian men” assures us that Babylon East is in view. Coincidentally, the identification of Babylon with the “race of Assyrian men” informs us, as do other extra-biblical texts from antiquity, that the Babylonians were thought of as included among the Assyrian peoples. In view of this, it should not surprise us that the king of Babylon in Isaiah’s oracle of Isa 13-14 is also called “the Assyrian” (cf. Isa 14.03 and 14.25, and note that Isaiah 14.25 does not begin a new prophecy as suggested by the heading in the NIV, but continues the oracle against Babylon that begins in Isaiah 13.01). Returning to the Sibylline oracle, we read that Assyrian Babylon’s woe will befall her in retribution for having sacked God’s great temple [in Jerusalem], and that after a bloodbath her destruction will be so complete

⁸⁸ See Charlesworth.

as to leave her as though she had never existed.⁸⁹

This does not tell us anything we didn't already know from Isaiah and Jeremiah. The final prophetic words left to us by Jeremiah have to do with Mesopotamian Babylon's utter destruction:

Jer 51.60 Jeremiah had written on a scroll about all the disasters that would come upon Babylon — all that had been recorded concerning Babylon. **61** He said to Seraiah, “When you get to Babylon, see that you read all these words aloud. **62** Then say, ‘O LORD, you have said you will destroy this place, so that neither man nor animal will live in it; it will be desolate forever.’ **63** When you finish reading this scroll, tie a stone to it and throw it into the Euphrates. **64** Then say, ‘So will Babylon sink to rise no more because of the disaster I will bring upon her. And her people will fall.’”

A Jewish author in Egypt, living around 150 BC, would have had thorough knowledge of Isaiah's and Jeremiah's books. Such an author would not himself have needed divine inspiration to declare the complete demise of Assyrian Babylon. What's interesting for us is that this author believed Babylon's dramatic fall to be yet future, for at this time the city was well into its gradual decline toward village status. This sibyl, or *pseudo-sibyl*, apparently believed that Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon would rise once again to sociopolitical significance.

The Sibylline passage about Babylon *West* is more interesting still. Also originating from Alexandria, but sometime around AD 115, this passage from book 5 puts Babylon in the land of Italy:

Sibyl. 5. 158 ... then shall come a great star from heaven into the divine sea, 159 and shall burn up the deep sea and Babylon itself, 160 and the land of Italy on whose account 161 many faithful saints of the Hebrews have perished, and the true people. 162 Thou shalt be afflicted with evil among evil men, 163 but thou shalt remain utterly desolate for whole ages hereafter, . . . 164 hating thy soil because thou didst love magic. 165 -- 166 Adulteries are with thee and unlawful intercourse with boys, 167 effeminate and unjust, thou wicked city, most ill-starred of all. 168 Woe unto thee all unclean city of Latin land, 169 frenzied and [poison- loving], in widowhood shalt thou sit beside thy banks, 170 and river Tiber shall mourn for thee, his wife, 171 that hadst a bloodthirsty heart and a godless mind. 172 Didst thou not know what God can do and what are his designs? 173 But thou hast said, I am unique, and none shall bring ruin on me. 174 But now God whose Being is for ever shall destroy thee and all of thine, 175 and there shall be no token of thee in that land, 176 as of old when the Mighty God found for thee thine honour. 177 Remain. O lawless one, unique, and, wedded unto flaming fire, 178 make thine home in the nether region of Hades where laws are not.

Could this passage be a genuine revelation given to some inspired but anonymous Jewish or even Christian prophet? Almost anything is possible, but I choose to believe that the author of this passage knew the text of Rev 17 and 18, and borrowed words and phrases from John to write his or her own version of Rome's eschatological ruin.

89 Perhaps Lactantius (c. 304-313) referred to such an oracle when he wrote, “It should not appear incredible to anyone that a kingdom founded with such vastness, and increased by so many and such men ... will, nevertheless, fall at some time. There is nothing built by human strength that cannot equally be destroyed by human strength. ... The Sibyls openly say that Rome is doomed to perish — and that, indeed, it will perish by the judgment of God. For it held His name in hatred. Being the enemy of righteousness, it destroyed the people who kept the truth.” *Divine Institutes*, VII, xv. See Roberts and Donaldson, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*.

Notice that this sibylline passage has a “wicked city” in view (v. 167), the city that sits on the banks of the river Tiber (v. 170), even as the Revelation has “the great city” in view (Rev 17.18) that sits on seven hills (Rev 17.09). The Italian Babylon of the sibyl has “a bloodthirsty heart” (v. 171) and is guilty of killing Hebrews and “the true people” (v. 161), even as Revelation’s Mystery Babylon is “drunk with the blood of the saints” and prophets (Rev 17.06; 18.24). The sibyl’s Babylon is guilty of practicing magic, adulteries and pederasty, just as John’s Mystery Babylon practices magic (Rev 18.23) and is filthy with fornication and adultery (Rev 17.02,04; 18.03,09). Just as Revelation’s Babylon boasts, “I sit as a queen; I am not a widow, and I will never mourn” (Rev 18.7), so the sibyl’s “unclean city of Latin land” (v. 168) says, “I am unique, and none shall ruin me” (v. 173) — yet she is doomed to “widowhood” (v. 169). As John’s Babylon will be consumed by fire (Rev 17.16; 18.08), the sibyl’s Latin Babylon has a destiny “wedded unto flaming fire” (v. 177). Finally, as the Revelation’s Mystery Babylon “will be thrown down, never to be found again” (Rev 18.21), even so the sibyl says of her Italian Babylon that “there shall be no token of thee in that land” (v. 175).

We see from this comparison of passages that we are hardly the first interpreters to take Revelation 17 and 18 at face value. Others before us accepted that these chapters of Revelation predicted the complete destruction of Rome, Italy. At the very least, if we surmise that book 5 of the *Sibylline Oracles* was composed without knowledge of John’s Revelation, we can conclude that Mediterranean people of the first couple centuries after Christ saw the character of Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon stamped on the city of Rome, and expected this “Babylon West” to share the Sodom-and-Gomorra-like fate of “Babylon East.”

APPENDIX 3

DAVID BARON ON THE VISION OF THE EPHAH

The great Jewish Christian expositor, David Baron, in his book, *The Visions & Prophecies of Zechariah* (first published, 1918), expounds upon the meaning of the ephah:

(a) The *ephah* ... was the largest measure for dry good in use among the Jews The most general interpretation of this symbol ... is that it signified the (full) measure of Israel's sins, beyond which there is to be no more forgiveness, but a carrying away, or banishing from the land

But, though it is a solemn truth that God allows evil fully to develop itself, and iniquity to fill up its full measure of guilt before He finally interposes in judgment, the usual interpretations ... overlook the fact that the ephah instead of being represented as the measure into which the people pile up their iniquities, is spoken of itself "*going forth*" (הֹיֵצֵאתָ, the same expression as is used of the Flying Roll in ver. 3) to pervade the people with its influence, and to stamp upon it, so to say, its own characteristic features, so that "this shall be their appearance ('their aspect,' or 'resemblance') in all the land."

If we ask ourselves what was this new power, or principle, which exercised such a mighty formative influence over the Jewish people ever since the Babylonian Captivity, and which is gradually also bringing all the other nations of the earth under its sway, the answer is *trade* or *commerce*, of which the *ephah* is the natural emblem.

With their banishment to Babylon and subsequent dispersion and peculiar position among the nations, there not only began an altogether new period of Jewish history, but there commenced also the processes by which the bulk of the nation became gradually transformed from an agricultural and pastoral people into a nation of merchantmen, and the new occupations into which they were forced by the altered circumstances tended in a peculiar sense to develop the two transgressions (namely, *theft* and *perjury*) which are specified in the preceding vision of the Flying Roll, with which this vision of the ephah stands very closely related. Idolatry, into which they were so liable to fall, was for ever left behind in Babylon; but a godless commercialism, with its temptations "to make the ephah small and the shekel great, and to deal falsely with balances of deceit" (Amo 08.05), eventually becomes not less hateful to God — not only because it has too often been supported by *theft* and *perjury*, which, as we have seen, are transgressions of the central commands of both tables of the Law, but because it was destined to develop a new *system* in which all iniquity would finally be summed up.

Mr. Baron then proceeds to discuss the lead cover:

(b) In conjunction with the ephah we have the כִּכָּר, *kikar*, which the [KJV] renders "talent."

...

The word, as Dr. Wright points out, is not elsewhere found in the signification of a *cover*, though that is a possible sense. "It is constantly used of a fixed weight, by which gold, silver, and other things are weighed and measured, and is naturally spoken of in such a meaning here in connection with the Ephah, as the latter was the usual measure of capacity. The talent was the largest measure of quantity, and the weight was made of lead as the most common heavy metal, and was used in all commercial transactions for weighing out money."

That a "talent," the other chief emblem and instrument of trade, should have been seen by the prophet as forming the *cover* of the ephah, is of solemn significance, as will be shown further on.

The plot thickens:

(c) The “talent,” or circular mass of lead, being lifted, the prophet beheld a *woman* sitting in the midst of the ephah.

“And he said” (*i.e.*, the Angel, as if to call anew the prophet’s special attention), “this is the Wickedness” — the very embodiment of iniquity, rendered in the Septuagint ἀνομία, *lawlessness*.⁹⁰

The woman is usually taken by commentators to symbolize the Jewish people, which, when the measure of sin shall have become full, would be carried away into captivity. But the seventy years’ captivity in Babylon was now at an end, and the idea of a retrospective significance of the symbolism of this vision, which Jerome and Rosenmüller adopt, seems to me untenable. All the other visions of Zechariah relate to the future — as Hengstenberg well observes, why should this be the sole exception? In the judgment of the Flying Roll a coming judgment is foretold. Why should this one of the Ephah be referred to the past?

Neither can it be properly referred to the subsequent captivity, as Hengstenberg and others attempt to do. There was, indeed, another dispersion of the Jewish people after the restoration from Babylon, but that could not well be represented in any special sense as a carrying away “into the land of Shinar.” Besides, as I have tried to show in the introductory remarks to the exposition of the preceding vision of the Flying Roll, the scope and purport of the two visions in chap. 5 are not the *punishment of the nation*, but the *cleansing* of the restored people and land, and the stamping out and banishment *from their midst* not only of the *guilt* of sin, but of iniquity or “wickedness” itself.

We regard, therefore, the woman in this vision, not as a personification of the Jewish people, nor as a collective representation of individual sinners who are finally gathered into one heap in the ephah, *but as delineating the (then as yet hidden) moral system of which the ephah is the emblem.*

And it is not inappropriate that the system engendered by the ephah, which in its essence is the worship of Mammon, should be represented by a woman, “because of the power it displays as a temptress, whereby it exercises such an enticing and dangerous influence over the souls of men.” Or, as Grotius observed: This form of wickedness is here described as a woman “because she is the mother of thefts and perjuries, and of all crimes.” But though the vision, like all the rest, has primary reference to *the* land and *the* people — and the purport of its message is that the system which is characterized as the Wickedness (and is altogether alien and opposed to the principles of the redeemed and sanctified community in the land in which the King of Righteousness shall have His seat) shall be banished to the place, or sphere, to which it originally belongs — it is a solemn truth that this same evil power of the ephah, with its all pervading controlling influence, is “going forth” also in the whole world; so that of all the civilised nations in particular it must be said: “This is their aspect, or resemblance, in all the earth.”

It is a striking and noteworthy fact, which no intelligent man can fail to observe, that commerce is more and more bringing the nations under its sway.

It now sets up the governments and dictates the policies of the nations. It is for it that the mighty armaments are being built and that wars are being made.

In all the earth and among all the nations that which is symbolised by the ephah is becoming the great controlling centre of society. “The producing power of manufacture, the distributing skill of the merchant, the controlling power of those who trade in money and command the circulating medium of commerce — these and similar interests, when combined, are able to speak with a

⁹⁰ This is the word used of *the man of lawlessness* and of the *secret power of lawlessness* in 2Th 2.03,07.

voice which no government can refuse to hear. Their will is potent. Legislation and government accommodate themselves to their demands.”

That, for instance, “which is *most* distinctive in the present condition of England is her commercial system. Commerce, or the wealth and influence thence arising, has become the mainspring of England’s energies — the chief bulwark of her social institutions, the pillar of her government. When ecclesiastical power fell, and the feudal aristocracy became gradually enfeebled, and when the steady advance of the people seemed to make democracy (perhaps revolutionary democracy) the sure end of the social movement, there was gradually being formed in this country a new aristocracy, more potent than any, whether ecclesiastical or hereditary, that had preceded — the aristocracy of wealth. The expressions ‘commercial interest,’ ‘manufacturing interest,’ ‘moneyed interest,’ ‘Indian interest,’ and the like, suggest sufficiently intelligible ideas to English minds. The ramifications of these interests are so various and so extended that the mass of society is effectually reached and controlled by their influence; and thus a power has been consolidated the like to which has never before existed. In England this power is learning to work in harmony with the State. Indeed, the State has virtually become its organ. Plutocracy is a comprehensive, not an exclusive system. Its elasticity is great. It can adapt itself to the changing circumstances of the hour, and receiving within its circle both the aristocrat and the democrat, it provides a place of honour and influence for both.

...

“The abasement of the ecclesiastical *supremacy*, the establishment of constitutional monarchy, and the rise of commerce into sovereign influence, may be regarded as accomplished facts. They distinctively characterise England; and finally they will equally characterise every other kingdom that falls within the Roman world. ... We cannot marvel at this, for the Scriptures plainly declare that such shall be the principles of the closing period of our dispensation. Whatever opinion may be formed as to the particular city indicated in the 18th [chapter] of the Revelation, this at least is evident, that that chapter describes a closing scene in the world’s present history, and speaks of ‘merchants being the great men of the earth,’ and of a commercial city being ‘queen of the nations.’

“But it may be asked, Why should this be regretted? Is an ephah the symbol of evil? In other words, Is commerce *necessarily* sinful? We reply, No; commerce is not *necessarily* sinful. Commerce may be the mere exchange on just and righteous principles of the productions of various regions, or of various labourers. The effecting such exchange may involve no course of conduct that militates against the principles of God, or sacrifices His truth. But it may be otherwise. If commerce comes into such supremacy as to make her merchants the great men of the earth, the influences that governmentally order the nations would in that case fall into her hand. The world — educationally, politically, religiously, socially — would be virtually under her control. How blessed if her principles were the principles of God! But if the arrangements which are to characterise the nations as the latter day draws nigh are as evil as the Scriptures declare them to be, then they who by means of their commercial greatness control or sustain these arrangements must be the very pillars of the last great system of evil, and the commercial period of the world’s history becomes the period of its systematized transgression.”⁹¹

It is most probably, then, because of the part this system is to play in connection with the final apostasy, that it is characterized by the Angel with such emphasis as הַרְשָׁעָה — “the wickedness,” or “the lawlessness.”

But to return to the Scriptures immediately before us.

91 *Babylon and Egypt*, by B. W. Newton.

The Angel's action in throwing the woman back into the ephah, and casting the circular mass of lead "upon the mouth thereof," is meant, I believe, to set forth, not only the fact that the instruments of sin become the instruments of her punishment, but the still more solemn truth that men and nations who sell themselves to sin are, after a time, kept down and tied to that particular sin; or, to use the language of Pro 05.22: "*His own iniquities shall take the wicked, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sin.*"

...

Thus, when the woman attempts to escape, she is thrown back into the ephah, which becomes, so to say, the chariot in which she is carried away as something which is defiled and defiling, from the land in which God shall dwell; and the talent with which she carries on her unrighteous trade becomes the heavy weight by which she is held down till she is landed safely "in her own place," where, after a season of lawless liberty in which she will allure men to their own destruction by her seductive attractiveness and luxury, she will be judged and destroyed, together with him who is pre-eminently styled "The Wicked One," by the brightness of the Lord's *parousia* (2Th 2.08).

(d) We come now to the last act in the drama of this vision, which, as already said, is primarily intended to set forth the removal of "wickedness" from the holy land without occupying itself with its final destiny in the land to which, by the aid of evil powers, it was for a time transplanted.

...

... "By reason of the curse described (in the previous vision) as overtaking all who followed in wicked ways," observes Dr. Wright, "no place is left for [the ephah woman] any longer in the land of righteousness, among people whose transgressions are forgiven and who are sanctified to bring forth fruit unto holiness. The winged women, therefore, bear off the evil one to the land of Shinar, there to build for her a home and a house."

The land of Shinar is, of course, the region encompassing the kingdom of Babel (Gen 10.10), where the tower of Babel was built (Gen 11). So we discover that the woman in the ephah, the wicked spirit of commercialism, is removed from Israel and transported to Babylon! However, she is not haphazardly dumped somewhere; she is taken explicitly to rest on a pedestal in her own temple. In other words, the spirit of commercialism is seen in the vision of the ephah to migrate from Israel to Mesopotamian Babylon, to be established there as the soul of revitalized Mammon worship. That worship will reach its zenith with the inauguration of the mark of the Beast.

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ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS DOCUMENT

When abbreviating Bible book names for references, I use the 3-letter system used by *BibleWorks*, without a period following (e.g., Revelation = Rev). I separate chapter and verse references with a period, rather than the traditional colon, and I use a zero place-holder with single-digit references for the sake of computer sorting. The traditional Rev. 17:1 thus becomes Rev 17.01. Unless otherwise stated, Scripture quotations are from the NIV.

1Co = 1 Corinthians
1Ki = 1 Kings
1Ti = 1 Timothy
2Ki = 2 Kings
2Th = 2 Thessalonians
3Jo = 3 John
Act = Acts
AFP = Agence France-Presse
ASV = American Standard Version (of 1901)
c. = *circa*, approximately
cf. = *confer*, compare
d. = Died
Dan = Daniel
Deu = Deuteronomy
Eph = Ephesians
Est = Esther
EU = European Union
EUR = Euro (monetary unit)
Exo = Exodus
Eze = Ezekiel
ff. = and following
Gen = Genesis
Grk = Greek
Heb = Hebrew, or book of Hebrews
Isa = Isaiah
Jam = James
Jer = Jeremiah
Joe = Joel
Joh = Gospel of John
KJV = King James Version
Lev = Leviticus
Luk = Luke
LXX = Septuagint (ancient Greek translation of the OT)
Mar = Mark
Mat = Matthew
NASB = New American Standard Bible
NIV = New International Version
NGO = Non-government Organization
NLT = New Living Translation
NT = New Testament
OT = Old Testament
Phi = Philippians
Rev = Revelation
Rom = Romans
Zec = Zechariah

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