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Who is Mystery, Babylon the Great?

"And upon her forehead was a name written,
MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT,
THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH"

(Revelation 17:5).

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Preface

Why should the "Spirit of Wisdom and Understanding" (Isaiah 11:2) inspire the Apostle John to record that Babylon the Great is "THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH" (17:5)? The ziggurats of the Sumerians, Babylonians, Assyrians, and the Mayan people of Central America indicate the antiquity of such structures as the Tower of Babel-- built like the Egyptian pyramids in receding tiers, often of sun-baked bricks, e.g., "Go to, let us make brick, and burn them throughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar" (Genesis 11:3). These ziggurats normally had shrines at the top, which indicated their use for religious worship. One of the most ancient examples of these ziggurats was discovered in Erech, i.e., "And the beginning of [Nimrod's] kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar" (10:10), dating more than 3,000 years before Christ. For this reason, Babylon the Great would be viewed as the Fountainhead of Idolatry and Spiritual Harlotry and "ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH" (17:5), since the time of Noah's Flood.

Ancient Babylon: The Mother of Harlots

The very name Babylon is also translated as Babel in the Old Testament. "8 And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the Earth. 9 He was a mighty hunter before the LORD: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod [literally, rebellion] the mighty hunter before the LORD. 10 And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel [literally, confusion], and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar" (Genesis 10:8-10). Subsequently, the building on a "plain in the land of Shinar" (11:2). of a "city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven" (11:4); was devised to exalt man and not God. "11 Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names. 12 Nevertheless man being in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish" (Psalm 49:11-12). Jehovah's judgment was to scatter and confuse them, because the intent of the builders of the Tower of Babel was not only to exalt the name of man, i.e., "let us make us a name" (Genesis 11:4), but to refuse obedience to the Almighty's command to "be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the Earth" (9:1)-- which implies populating and overspreading the Earth-- as can be seen in their concern that they would "be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole Earth" (11:4).

Papal Rome: Babylon's Tradition

It is typical of a prostitute to know "no shame" (Zephaniah 3:5), inasmuch that Scripture speaks of a "whore's forehead" (Jeremiah 3:3), i.e., "Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush" (Jeremiah 6:15). John Gill (1809) recorded that some harlots of ancient times impudently advertised their names over their doors, as well as upon their foreheads. But, the name emblazoned *by God* upon the forehead of the Whore, "MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH" (17:5), makes simple her identification. "Knowledge is easy unto him that understandeth" (Proverbs 14:6). The Greek word *musterion*, which is translated "MYSTERY" (17:5), is capitalized by the translators of the King James Version as part of the title "BABYLON THE GREAT" (17:5); however, it *may* only be an adjective describing the woman's title, e.g., "Babylon the great" (18:2). John Wesley also reminds us, "This very word ['MYSTERY'] was inscribed on the front of the Pope's mitre, till some of the Reformers took public notice of it" (from Wesley's comments on Revelation 17:5 in his "Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament" [1765].) [See our article, "[An Earnest Appeal to Roman Catholics: Or, Roman Catholicism Examined in Light of the Scriptures](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/An.Earnest.Appeal.html)" -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/An.Earnest.Appeal.html> --, for a realistic look at Catholicism.] In his classic expose on Romanism, Alexander Hislop (1809-1865), a Scottish Free Church minister, wrote, "There never has been any difficulty in the mind of any enlightened Protestant in identifying the woman 'sitting on seven mountains,' and having on her forehead the name written, 'Mystery, Babylon the Great,' with the Roman apostacy" (from the Introduction to "The Two Babylons: Or, The Papal Worship Proved to be the Worship of Nimrod and His Wife" [1853].) It has been a common position of Christians since the Reformation to view Roman Catholicism as a corruption of the Primitive Church, and a torch bearer of the "mystery of iniquity" (2Thessalonians 2:7) that has polluted the world from Ancient Babylon to the present. Henry Alford (1857) saw Roman Catholicism in the BABYLON THE GREAT of this passage: "I do not hesitate therefore, induced mainly by these considerations, which will be confirmed as we proceed step by step in the prophecy, to maintain that interpretation which regards papal and not pagan Rome as pointed out by the harlot of this vision" (from "Alford's Greek Testament: An Exegetical and Critical Commentary," IV, p. 705.) [See "[The Reformation and the Church of Rome](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Timeline/Babylon.The.Great.Part.2.html)" -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Timeline/Babylon.The.Great.Part.2.html> -- from our in-depth series of articles on "[Babylon the Great](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/WStS.Timeline.html#Babylon)" -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/WStS.Timeline.html#Babylon> -- for "[Martin Luther's perspective of Rome's connection to Babylon](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Timeline/Babylon.The.Great.Part.2.html#History%20of%20Babylon)" -- [http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Timeline/Babylon.The.Great.Part.2.html#History of Babylon](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Timeline/Babylon.The.Great.Part.2.html#History%20of%20Babylon) --.]

One World Worship: The False Prophet's Final Stage

What will be the final form of Babylon the Great? We can be sure that the Whore:

- (1) Will be personified as "the False Prophet" (Revelation 16:13). Since Babylon the Great only rides the Beast, i.e., "I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast [the Antichrist]" (17:3), she is not to be confused with the Beast himself. Her intimacy with the Beast stems from her need for the governmental power of the Beast to assure her a monopolistic religious franchise, i.e., "as many as would not worship the image of the Beast should be killed" (13:15).
- (2) Will promote the worship of the Antichrist., i.e., Babylon the Great "exerciseth all the

power of the first beast [the Antichrist] before him, and causeth the Earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed" (Revelation 13:12). Babylon the Great's ingenious device will be forcing the world to take the Mark of the Beast, which assures the participation of every human being in the religion of Babylon the Great, in exchange for life and its physical necessities. "16 And [the False Prophet] causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: 17 and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name" (13:16-17).

(3) Will spiritually fornicate with the kings of the Earth, i.e., "With whom the kings of the Earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the Earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication" (17:2), because, as with the Antichrist, she needs their help to force her religion upon the world. Her spiritual fornication is that she will champion the violation of the Most High God's Law of Love. "Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind... Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matthew 22:37, 39).

(4) Will be blasphemous, i.e., "And [Babylon the Great] had power to give life unto the image of the Beast, that the image of the Beast should both speak... full of names of blasphemy" (13:15; 17:3). "10 And, behold, there met him a woman with the attire of an harlot, and subtil of heart... 21 With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him" (Proverbs 7:10, 21).

(5) Will be materially rich, i.e., "And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication" (Revelation 17:4).

(6) Will be a murderer of the True Saints, i.e., "And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the Saints, and with the blood of the Martyrs of Jesus" (Revelation 17:6).

(7) Will reign over the people of the world, i.e., the "inhabitants of the Earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication... The waters which thou sawest, where the Whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues" (Revelation 17:2, 15).

(8) Will be characterized as a city, i.e., "And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the Earth" (Revelation 17:18). Alexander Hislop recorded: "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.' In times long subsequent, the same kind of language was in current use; for when Symmachus, the prefect of the city, and the last acting Pagan Pontifex Maximus, as the Imperial substitute, introduces by letter one friend of his to another, he calls him 'De septem montibus virum'--'a man from the seven mountains,' meaning thereby, as the commentators interpret it, 'Civem Romanum,' 'A Roman Citizen.' Now, while this characteristic of Rome has ever been well marked and defined, it has always been easy to show, that the Church which has its seat and headquarters on the seven hills of Rome might most appropriately be called 'Babylon,' inasmuch as it is the chief seat of idolatry under the New Testament, as the ancient Babylon was the chief seat of idolatry under the Old" (from the Introduction to "The Two Babylons: Or, The Papal Worship Proved to be the Worship of Nimrod and His Wife" [1853].)

(9) Will be destroyed by the Antichrist, i.e., "And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the Beast, these shall hate the Whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire" (Revelation 17:16).

(10) Will be judged by the Almighty God. i.e., "For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil His will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the Beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled" (Revelation 17:17). [Read our "Commentary on the Book of Revelation" -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/html> -- for more about these not-so-future events.]

Conclusion

Who is Babylon the Great? The evidence of Scripture and the support of history indicate that Ancient Babylon has continued her whorish tradition through Roman Catholicism, inundating and polluting America, but still awaiting a final vehicle to forcibly include all people and all religious traditions in the ultimate worship of the Antichrist. "[Antichrist] opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God" (2Thessalonians 2:4). Though the Roman Pontiff has adopted the wait-and-see Gamaliel approach to the chartering of the United Religions Initiative (URI), if the Almighty soon chooses to remove His watching and waiting Saints by Pre-Tribulational Rapture, then the events of the ensuing Tribulation Week will take away the necessity of a voluntary, interfaith URI. [Read our editorial, "[United Religions \(2000\): A Tower Unto Heaven](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/Edit_United.Religions.html)" -- http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/Edit_United.Religions.html --, for more background on the URI.] Of course, the events of the Tribulation Week will mean that the Pope must mandate the worship of the Antichrist "in the midst of the week" (Daniel 9:27), if he continues to pursue the headship of world worship, namely as the False Prophet. "Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every man his soul: be not cut off in her iniquity; for this is the time of the LORD'S vengeance; He will render unto her a recompence" (Jeremiah 51:6).

Wisdom is known by the company we keep. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed" (Proverbs 13:20). The purpose and benefit of the study of prophecy is to affect the decisions we make for the future, as well as impact the way we live today. "A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; but the simple pass on, and are punished" (Proverbs

27:12). Wisely Walking Saints will avoid the fellowship of those who knowingly walk in the darkness of Babylon the Great. "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Ephesians 5:11). Holy living demands not only walking with Christ apart from known sin, but departing from the company of those whose purpose is to cause us to sin. "And I heard another voice from Heaven, saying, Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Revelation 18:4). If we know that we are rapidly approaching the events of the Tribulation Week, then we ought to pray that we will walk worthy of the LORD, who has promised to deliver us from the Tribulation Week. "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man" (Luke 21:36). [See our article, "[Must There Be a Pre-Tribulational Rapture?](http://WhatSaihtTheScripture.com/Prophecy/Must.Pre.Trib.Rapture.html)" -- <http://WhatSaihtTheScripture.com/Prophecy/Must.Pre.Trib.Rapture.html> --, to investigate the Scriptural prospects of such an event.]

Maranatha!