

The Beast And Babylon (Part Ten): Babylon The Great Is A Nation

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Most of the articles in this series have dealt with identifying the location of modern, spiritual Babylon. Using evidence given in the Bible and applying it to world conditions today, we have seen that the evidence applies only to one people on earth: the Israelitish people. In what might seem as a step backward, this article will show more conclusively that the Bible describes the Babylon of Revelation 17-18 as a nation existing at the end time—indeed, one with a strong religious base, but not a harlot church.

Genesis 49:1, 16-17 shows an example of helpful biblical guidance:

And Jacob called his sons and said, "Gather together, that I may tell you what shall befall you in the last days. . . . Dan shall judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel. Dan shall be a serpent by the way, a viper by the path, that bites the horse's heels so that its rider shall fall backward."

Jacob's prophecy is intended for the "last days," the time just prior to Christ's return, and these verses reveal a major way biblical nations are identified for our understanding. If these descriptions of Jacob's sons' national characteristics are researched for geographical and historical evidence that has accumulated over the centuries, intriguing identities come to light. Similarly, the end-time Babylon is clearly described in Revelation 17-18 and elsewhere. It becomes our responsibility to find biblical and extra-biblical historical and geographical matches.

Amos 3:1-2 is a statement of Israel's relationship with God:

Hear this word that the Lord has spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities."

This statement of relationship is vital to Babylon's end-time identification. Only Israel of all nations has been coupled to God through a binding covenant likened to a marriage. A marriage covenant implies an intimacy limited only to those making the covenant. Israel alone of all nations has rightly earned the title "the Great Whore," as she alone came to know God through His revelation of Himself to her. In the biblical sense, a whore is a woman unfaithful to a covenant or to revealed standards. Israel alone had God's way of life so intimately revealed to her.

No other nation in all the history of mankind entered into a covenant with Him, vowing that all He said she would do. Thus, she alone of all nations was unfaithful to that exclusive union. God provides many proofs of her unfaithfulness and records of how He dealt with it in the prophetic and historical books. The biblical facts, when combined with the external evidence of history, point to end-time Israel. Most reading this article live in Israel and are commanded to come out of end-time Babylon, thus the concern over the Great Harlot's identification.

A number of times during the course of these articles, Babylon has been referred to as a "system." Babylon is a system, an anti-God way of doing things, but it is characterized most specifically in a particular nation. This nation, the focus of the Babylonian system and the one that most effectively influences other nations to follow it, is also identified as "Babylon." Thus, Babylon is both. Protestant commentaries, however, almost unanimously refer to Babylon as a system.

Israel Divided in Two

Some evangelical Protestant organizations focus a considerable amount of attention to biblical prophecy, but most of them are weak in several areas of understanding. Perhaps the most glaringly important is the identity of modern Israel—almost all of them say Israel is limited to the Jews. Their interpretations of prophecy, then, are slanted toward that tiny, New-Jersey-sized, Middle Eastern nation of less than ten million people. They overlook almost entirely that, at the time of the scattering, the twelve tribes of Israel were two distinct nations, each having their own land, capital city, and government.

The ten-tribed nation of Israel in the north, dominated by the Joseph tribes, Ephraim and Manasseh, had its capital city in Samaria. It can be claimed that the name "Israel" belongs to these two Joseph tribes because Jacob ordained Ephraim and Manasseh to carry it (Genesis 48:16). To the south of Israel, the remaining two tribes, Judah and Benjamin—thereafter called the Jews—had their capital city in Jerusalem. II Kings 16-18 makes this two-nation fact clear. Both nations also had the priestly tribe, Levi, scattered among them, for the Levites were never given land to support themselves.

When God's time to act came in the eighth century BC, He strengthened and sent the Assyrian nation to conquer the northern ten tribes. The Israelites were taken into captivity, became assimilated amongst their conquerors, and migrated with them as time went on. Israel never returned to be reunited with the Jews. History combined with biblical clues places them in northern and northwest Europe, and also in the colonies the Anglo-Saxon peoples established in other parts of the world.

However, God dealt somewhat differently with the Jews. At the end of the seventh century BC, He raised up and sent the Babylonian nation to conquer and take the Jews into captivity. However, after 70 years, because of prophecies involving the coming Messiah to come out of Judah, a remnant of Jews returned to Judea, reestablishing themselves as a nation in Palestine.

Two thousand six hundred years later, at the time of the end, we find Israelitish people scattered all over the world and a small number of Jews back in the ancestral homeland God originally gave to all the tribes of Israel. But what happened to Babylon?

Where Is Babylon in the End Time?

In Revelation 17-18, a prophecy clearly intended for the end time, Babylon is clearly addressed as a real nation and city, not merely a system that culturally dominates the earth. This is in some ways so obvious that many of the world's biblical commentators identify her as Rome, the Roman Empire, or the Catholic Church.

All of these are real entities, not just mystical, spiritual systems. However, some still cling to the idea that the Great Whore is merely a system, particularly a religious system. It is hoped that this article will help clarify that the Babylon of those chapters is indeed a nation of this world. One of the ways of showing this is through the principle of duality. Jesus says in John 5:17-18:

"My Father has been working until now, and I have been working." Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.

The proper understanding of this principle reveals to us—and thus guides and encourages us—that God's purpose is still on track. It gives us comfort and keeps us alert to the nearness of Christ's return. This is because, not only has God given us way-marks in real time through His prophets, but also because He is faithful and consistent in His purpose. Moreover, those way-marks also have true application later on in history.

If we are careful, we can legitimately take a verse or several verses within a section of Scripture and show that its application is not only to the time directly addressed by the author in context, but also parallels what is happening in our day. The prophecy served its purpose when originally uttered, and it also serves us today. Thus, it is said to have dual application; it applies both to them and to us, end-time descendants of the people to whom the original prophecy was given.

This is possible by understanding that our faithful God's recordings of the history of His relationship with mankind—and more importantly, the prophecies of His purpose and plan—encompass thousands of years of time, and that He is always moving toward accomplishing the goals He set for our guidance.

The phrase, "accomplishing the goals He set" is important. God is working; He is going to prove Himself to mankind and glorify Himself while accomplishing the development and salvation of His spiritual children. Revealing those ends is one of the purposes of prophecy. God is manifesting His love, wisdom, and power to us through them. We see and understand these things because He has given us the ability to comprehend their application in our time. We do this by evaluating what is happening in the world around us and comparing it to what happened anciently.

These prophecies set goals, inspire hope, and motivate His children to live by faith during the long periods of time the plan encompasses. The prophecies overwhelmingly encompass the past, present, and future of the Israelitish people and the church. Other nations are named only as they come into contact with Israel.

A Few Examples of Duality

Genesis 3:14-15 states:

So the Lord God said to the serpent: "Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel."

Some aspects of this prophecy began to be fulfilled almost immediately, but a huge time gap is built right into it. Its main feature, the revelation of the coming Messiah and His work of dealing the deathblow to Satan's efforts, did not come to pass until four thousand years later. Thus, the prophecy had dual application: One part for the serpent and Adam and Eve happened almost immediately, and its exceedingly more important part was fulfilled later.

In this case, history, recorded in the Bible itself, shows the prophecy's duality. Genesis 49:1, quoted earlier, is another case in point that can help us understand this principle of duality. One could easily be misled to conclude that "in the last days" applies exclusively to the end time. That is certainly its primary application, but it also had clear application at other times in Israel's history.

Throughout Israel's history, as recorded in both the Bible and secular sources, the characteristics of each tribe played dominant roles in the peoples' interactions with each other. For example, the kingly line came from Judah, including the Messiah. The tribe of Dan left marks of their presence wherever they wandered, and the Joseph tribes colonized and dominated Israel economically, politically, and militarily. This shows that there is a flexibility to God's prophecies that one can use accurately if one is careful not to go beyond what is intended by twisting the context.

Isaiah 7:13-14 presents another example of duality:

Then he said, "Hear now, O house of David! Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel."

How do we know this has dual application? Because the Bible directly confirms it in the New Testament (Matthew 1:18, 22-23). Thus, the prophecy Isaiah gave to Ahaz had application within a few years during Ahaz's lifetime, but its ultimate purpose was to announce the unusual conception of Christ about 700 years later.

Micah 3:9-12; 4:1-4 is interesting to consider in light of duality. In Micah 3, God presents His evidence why an impending destruction awaits Israel, but the opening phrase in chapter 4 states that "in the latter days it shall come to pass," beginning Micah's version of the peaceful scene also found in Isaiah 2:1-4. Micah was contemporary with Isaiah during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah over 700 years before Christ.

In the space of one verse, Micah jumps from the impending destruction of Judah and Israel that history shows occurred 600-700 years before Christ, to a time yet ahead of us! Does this sudden change mean that the prophecy of destruction just ahead of him in his day applies to our present time too? The term "last days" is a clue to this possibility, giving us permission to consider that the prophecy of destruction and its causes *may*, at the very least, parallel our time just as surely as the peaceful Kingdom scene can. We must use caution though.

Parallel Conduct and Attitudes

Ezekiel 16:44-49 shows us another way that can be used to identify the Great Harlot of Revelation: by observing parallel conduct. The word "parallel" opens another avenue for consideration of duality, but this time not directly in a prophecy. At this point in God's narration concerning Judah and Jerusalem, He is showing the parallel behavior of Judah with Samaria to the north and with Sodom to the south.

Verse 47 is especially clear regarding parallel conduct. The *Revised English Bible* translates it as, "Did you not behave as they did and commit the same abominations?" Regarding their relationship, verse 49 declares they are "sisters under the skin," as we would say today, because their behavior is so similar.

This opens the door to consider the parallel conduct that leads Him to call Jerusalem by the derogatory names of "Sodom and Egypt" (Revelation 11:8). At the time of the end, God observes parallel behaviors and attitudes in Jerusalem, Sodom, and Egypt. Thus Jerusalem, representing all of Israel, reveals her spiritual source, which is most certainly not the God of the Bible, despite what the Israelites might say in calling themselves "Christian." If God can name Israel "Sodom," why can He not also call her "Babylon"?

Jeremiah 50:1 begins a two-chapter prophecy of judgment against Babylon. Babylon was the dominant world power in Jeremiah's day, 600 years before Christ. Notice verses 4-6:

"In those days and in that time," says the Lord, "the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together; with continual weeping they shall come, and seek the Lord their God. They shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces toward it, saying, 'Come and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that will not be forgotten.' My people have been lost sheep, their shepherds have led them astray; they have turned them away on the mountains. They have gone from mountain to hill; they have forgotten their resting place."

Clearly, these verses are placed in the time just ahead of us. Is it possible, then, that at least some of the judgments pronounced against Babylon in these two chapters also actually apply to our time? Could what occurred to Babylon when God carried out His threats in the sixth century BC have been only a type of far greater end-time fulfillments against a modern Babylon?

Verse 6 plainly pictures an end-time scenario. The Israelites are even called the "lost sheep" of the house of Israel. It is as if God is saying they have forgotten who they are, and the world does not know their location either. God says they are "turned . . . away on the mountains." *Mountains* are a biblical symbol of large nations, and *hills*, of smaller ones. This prophecy foretells Israel's long-term scattering among Gentile peoples worldwide, and so thoroughly accomplished is the scattering that Israel has forgotten she began in Canaan.

Revelation 13, 17, and 18 establish that there are a Beast and a Babylon at the end time. Even as the Beast is literally an amalgamation of many nations with a strong, persecuting, religious component, so also is Babylon a literal nation with a somewhat different religious component and with an attitude that is not as animalistic as the Beast.

Just as the term "beast" shows the spirit of a group of violent, warlike, anti-God nations, the term "Babylon" reveals the source of the spirit of prideful rebellion motivating the Woman, who represents the end-time nation God calls Babylon. This is similar to God using Sodom and Egypt to illustrate Jerusalem in Revelation 11:8.

However, some people want to turn Babylon into a mere religious organization with only mystical and spiritual influence. The original city and nation of Babylon have disappeared into the sands of Iraq because God's judgments against them in Isaiah and Jeremiah were fully carried out.

End-Time Babylon Is a Powerful Nation

However, Revelation 17-18 describes the end-time Babylon, the Great Harlot, not as simply a religious organization, not even a system, but as a literal city and nation involved in massive, worldwide craftsmanship, manufacturing, entertainment, and commerce. It is a blockbuster political

and economic powerhouse, exercising global influence, over which businessmen weep when it is destroyed. They feel its loss personally, even though they are not literally a part of it, only having done business with it.

If indeed we are in the prophesied end time—and all indications suggest that we are—the only nation on earth today that fits this description as both an economic powerhouse and a great harlot, because of its broken relationship with God, is Israel led by the Joseph tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. Israel is still Israel, but it epitomizes the spirit of Babylon at the end time.

Ezekiel 28:1-5, 12-19 parallels Jeremiah 50-51 somewhat due to their similar content and style, but Ezekiel 28 is more easily understood. The chapter begins with an address against the human "prince" of Tyre. However, with barely a break, it begins addressing the spiritual "king" of Tyre, Satan. Thus from verses 12 through 19, the text is woven together so that some verses could apply to either or both.

Similarly, but less clearly discernible, Jeremiah 50 most directly addresses ancient Babylon in concert with modern, end-time Israel. It jumps from ancient to modern time in an instant, making one wonder whether much of what God says regarding ancient Babylon hint at His judgments against end-time Babylon, which would produce some interesting ramifications. These, however, would distract us from our study in duality.

While at the Feast of Tabernacles in 2003, I received a paper downloaded from the Internet. Unfortunately, my copy does not contain a clue as to who the original author is. In five long articles, the author presents many reasons why he believes America is Babylon. It is my opinion that most of his "proofs" are incorrectly applied, and some are downright wild. He, in fact, believes virtually every biblical mention of Babylon refers to America.

However, his fourth article is quite interesting because he lists 99 scriptural proofs that the Babylon of Revelation 17-18 is a literal nation. Many of them are marginal, but some of them are helpful because they are fairly obvious, being things we have already gone into, or because we have experienced them in some way in our lives. These are not biblical proofs but are significant anecdotal confirmations that buttress our faith. Consider these elements:

» Revelation 17:1 reads, "Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, 'Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters.'"

» Revelation 18:2 adds, "And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, 'Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a habitation of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird.'"

Notice the word "great" in both descriptions. End-time Babylon is not puny and insignificant, operating under the cover of some other greater organization. *Great* means "large," "immense," "prodigious," "massive," "considerable," and "extraordinary." All by itself, Babylon is powerful and influential, a major player on the world scene.

» Revelation 17:18 says, "And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth."

The mention of kings doing obeisance to her indicates her political influence is worldwide, and she can be perceived as the source of an attempt to produce world government. Do the kings of the earth today do obeisance to the Catholic Church? To the contrary, they seem to be doing all they can to negate any influence the Catholic Church might have.

» Revelation 18:3, 9-11, 19 add: "For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury. . . . And the kings of the earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her will weep and lament for her, when they see the smoke of her burning, standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come.' And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore. . . . And they threw dust on their heads and cried out, weeping and wailing, and saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city, in which all who had ships on the sea became rich by her wealth! For in one hour she is made desolate.'"

Babylon the Great is clearly the economic nerve-center of world trade, not of religion. Notice, first the kings of the earth bewail her destruction, and then the businessmen follow suit. It is hard to imagine both the kings of the earth and hardheaded businessmen bewailing the destruction of a church! These leaders are bewailing the destruction of an entity in which their power and wealth are involved, placing them in grave danger of overwhelming loss because Babylon is no longer able to consume their products.

Notice in Revelation 18:3, 7, 19, and 23 how clear the inferences and direct statements are regarding wealth, not only of Babylon itself, but also of those who trade with her. How can these scriptures apply to a church? Modern Israel has been largely responsible for causing the prosperity of Germany, Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, and now China through trade.

Revelation 17:1 plainly declares that she sits upon many waters, and Revelation 18:17, 19 add related material through the mention of ships, sailors, and trading by sea. She sits, meaning that she rules, exercises her authority, operates, or is located, upon many waters. We cannot exclude the dual possibilities here of waters representing both peoples and literal waters. Please recall that this is a description of an end-time Babylon.

The ancient city of Babylon sat astride the Euphrates River, but the nation itself was essentially landlocked. If God is describing the ancient nation, it is a poor application. By way of contrast, every nation of modern Israel except Switzerland sits on an ocean and has a multitude of deep-water seaports.

End-time Babylon has a large number of sea gates and is graced by great rivers and many large freshwater lakes. What this entire word picture in Revelation 17 and 18 describes is its political, military, economic, and geographic dominance. It is especially dominant worldwide in trade—so much so that Revelation 18:23 says that its merchants, not its priests, are called "the great men of the earth."

Jeremiah 50:23 provides additional insight by using an epithet: "How the hammer of the whole earth has been cut apart and broken! How Babylon has become a desolation among the nations!" *Hammer* is used figuratively to symbolize "that which affects change." A literal hammer affects change in

what it is used for or against. It can be used for constructive building or for bashing and tearing apart. It is used to forge metal, to drive pegs and nails, and change the shape of stone.

The hammer is the underlying theme that suggests the harlot's cultural influence in Revelation 17-18. Modern Babylon, Israel, is a nation of tremendous influence, using its economic, military, and political powers, as well as its religions and entertainments to affect change in other nations according to its desires. Is this not what the United States is attempting to do in Iraq right now? Moses prophesies in Deuteronomy 33:13, 17:

And of Joseph he said: "Blessed of the Lord is his land, with the precious things of heaven, with the dew, and the deep lying beneath. . . . His glory is like a firstborn bull, and his horns like the horns of the wild ox; together with them he shall push the peoples to the ends of the earth; they are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh."

Does this not picture what Britain, France, and the Netherlands have done in the past through colonizing and wielding political and military power in such places as the Far East, Middle East, and Africa? In our day, have not the United States, Britain, and France been the prime movers in founding, funding, shaping, and using the United Nations?

Revelation 18:22 shows an unusual aspect of this dominance in shaping culture: "The sound of harpists, musicians, flutists, and trumpeters shall not be heard in you anymore. No craftsman of any craft shall be found in you anymore. And the sound of a millstone shall not be heard in you anymore."

Modern Israel is a huge exporter of music. My wife and I saw part of a television special of former Beatle Paul McCartney's concert in Russia this past year, the first visit of any of the Beatles there. The concert was held in Red Square, and that huge plaza was jammed with people, most of whom stood throughout the entire several-hour affair, singing along in English. The Russians knew the songs in English! It was an incredible demonstration of the power of Israelite celebrity.

However, the use of the music imagery really represents the much broader subject of entertainment, including films and professional athletics. Professional Israelitish soccer, basketball, football, baseball, and golf have invaded the entertainment realm of nations worldwide, and now the Gentile nations are entering their players and teams in competition with Israelitish professionals.

Isaiah 47:12-13 reports:

Stand now with your enchantments and the multitude of your sorceries, in which you have labored from your youth—perhaps you will be able to profit, perhaps you will prevail. You are wearied in the multitude of your counsels; let now the astrologers, the stargazers, and the monthly prognosticators stand up and save you from these things that shall come upon you.

Revelation 18:2 reinforces this theme: "And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, 'Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a habitation of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and cage for every unclean and hated bird!'"

Modern, end-time Israel, like ancient Babylon, is deep into the occult and spiritism, both in terms of worshipping demons as a matter of religious observance, as well as high-ranking political figures

seeking their guidance in national affairs. It was published in the United States that President Dwight Eisenhower consulted astrologers during World War II about such things as the timing of the Normandy invasion. Also circulated were accounts of Nancy Reagan consulting astrologers and then advising her husband, the President. If it is done in the White House, it is most assuredly done elsewhere in government.

Mystery Babylon stands revealed as the Israelitish people through duality, parallel conduct, attitudes, and actions. God directly names them with epithets such as Sodom and Egypt. He describes her in Revelation 17 and 18 as a consuming and trading nation of enormous wealth and influence, one who has broken her covenant with God through "fornication," but who is right now at the peak of her glorious but idolatrous, immoral power. She is temporarily holding in check the rise of the Beast, but she will soon be cut down and burned with fire in preparation for meeting the true God and learning her true destiny.