

Babylon the Great, Mother of Harlots -- New York City?

Anonymous

Revelation 17:3-5

3 So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.*

4 The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication.*

5 And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.*

There are lots of theories about what that phrase of Revelation 17:5 means. One traditional view contends that this Babylon, at the time of Christ's return will be the Catholic Church. The principal reason for this view is that over the centuries the Catholic Church has been responsible for the deaths of several million non-Catholic Christians, and many protestants believe that given the opportunity, the Pope would again demand conversion to the Catholic faith on pain of death. Scripturally, Babylon, the mother of harlots, is portrayed as being "drunk with the blood of the saints." (Rev. 17:6) Also, this Babylon is pictured as a city sitting on seven hills, which is the traditional picture of Rome.

Another view, a much more modern one, of this evil woman of Revelation is that it represents specifically the city of New York, and generally, the United States of America. There is much in the description of Babylon in Revelation 17 and 18 to give us the impression that it is a city of immense commercial and economic power, just like New York City, which is probably the greatest commercial and banking center in the history of the world. This view of modern Babylon (which, by the way, is a popular euphemism for New York City) sets New York City as the de facto capital of the world with its United Nations headquarters, Wall Street, enormous gold reserves in its Federal Reserve bank, etc. In its power New York, and by extension the United States, sits as a queen on seven hills, the seven continents of the world.

As you can see, there is something to be said for each of these views, but there is also ample reason to question each. For one thing, neither New York nor the U.S. has been known to be hostile to the people of God. Quite the contrary. The U.S.

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has always welcomed the persecuted. We all know the words on the Statue of Liberty, "Give me your tired, your poor, ..." So, at least at this point in our history, we cannot say that the U.S. is "drunk with the blood of the saints."

And, as for the Catholic Church, even though they have unmercifully persecuted non-Catholics in the past, it is not happening today (although some would contend that it is only because of lack of opportunity). Also, the Catholic Church in no way is the worldwide commercial monster described in Revelation.

So, where does that leave us?

First, it should be obvious that this Babylon, Mother of Harlots, has not yet revealed itself to us, at least in the specific geographic and commercial terms that we are looking for.

But, there is a way to look at this that makes sense, and I hope I have the skills to make it plain enough to understand. The key to understanding who modern Babylon is lies in Revelation 18:4, which reads as follows:

Then I heard another voice from heaven say:

"Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues;..."

The Lord always sets a high priority on warning His people of impending danger so that they might avoid it, and the same is the case here. God intends to destroy Babylon, and He does not want His people to be harmed by the judgment He is bringing against her.

In light of Revelation 18:4, we can make these somewhat obvious conclusions. First, to "come out of her" involves more than just leaving the Catholic Church or her Protestant daughters, those wayward churches that she brought to birth and who owe much of their doctrine and tradition (yes, even their very existence) to their "mother" Catholic Church.

Also, we cannot say that Babylon refers specifically and only to the United States and/or New York City. Otherwise, all we would have to do is leave the country to ensure our safety.

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Having said that, how can we best describe Babylon as it exists in our world? First, Babylon is a system that controls people. It does it through many means, but what the voice from heaven meant in Revelation when it said, "Come out of her, my people," is that the people of God must disengage their affections from those things that supply the motive force that keeps this babylonish beast moving. We must stop yearning for what Babylon has to offer. Yes, it glitters, but it also controls, debases, demoralizes, seduces, enslaves. The people of God must get back to the idea that we are pilgrims here on this earth awaiting our Lord's return. We are not citizens of this world, but sojourners. We are only passing through on our way to a much better world. Neither are we citizens of Babylon, and we must stop living as if we were.

Although I believe that Babylon is a whole system of existence and control that touts itself as a superior alternative to God and His way, am I saying that New York and America have nothing to do with the reference made to Babylon in Revelation 17 and 18? No, not at all. Probably the best example of the so-called New World Order of globalism is right here in the U.S., and New York is its commercial and financial capital. It is also the headquarters of the United Nations, that global government "wannabe" that seeks to place all sovereign governments under its controls.

What the United States and New York City lack in the embodiment of the harlot of Revelation 17 and 18 are a complete control over the world's religions and an absolute, venomous hatred of Christ and His people. Both the United States government and the United Nations have become increasingly aggressive in both their rejection of all things Christian and their efforts to bring religion under their control, but neither has reached the level of rejection and persecution described in Revelation 17:6. (in fact, communist and Muslim governments best fit that description.) For the description of the harlot to become a reality in today's world, there must be a absolute control of both government and religion. There must be a uniting of Church and State. With the complete cooperation of the Catholic Church it is possible that Church and State could be united under the flag of the United States or the United Nations, but lacking some sort of spectacular event that compels men everywhere to surrender themselves to both governmental and religious control, the identity of the harlot of Revelation will remain only partially visible to those who seek to know the meaning of this mystery.