

Defining The “Mysterious” Woman In Revelation 17 & 18

I. Intro To “Babylon The Great”

- a. “Babylon the great” is one of the key figures in the book of Revelation that must be explored if we are to understand the end of the age with clarity. John defines the concept of “Babylon the great” as a “*mystery*”, meaning, it requires thoughtful examination for interpretation. There are many theories as to the identity of “Babylon the great” that different futurist bible interpreters hold to, which has often made this topic confusing for the average Bible reader (*Some different opinions for her identity have been: Rome, Jerusalem, A New World Order, New York City, USA, Literal Ancient Babylon, or Mecca/Saudi Arabia*).

(Revelation 17:1-6a NASB) “Come here, I will show you the judgment of the great prostitute who sits on many waters, 2 with whom the kings of the earth committed acts of sexual immorality, and those who live on the earth became drunk with the wine of her sexual immorality.” 3 And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness; and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast, full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns. 4 The woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold, precious stones, and pearls, holding in her hand a gold cup full of abominations and of the unclean things of her sexual immorality, 5 and on her forehead a name was written, a mystery: “BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.” 6 And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus.”

- b. Despite the seeming ambiguity in the scriptures related to this “*mysterious woman*”, The Bible actually lays out a clear criterion for interpreting her identity. Simply by reading **Revelation 17** and **18**, one can highlight many “*identifying points*” that actually help us identify a biblically accurate possible identity for “Babylon the great”.

(Revelation 17:6b-7 NASB) “...When I saw her, I wondered greatly. 7 And the angel said to me, “Why do you wonder? I will tell you the mystery of the woman...”

- c. The Bible tells us that *Babylon the Great* is a literal “*megacity*” and “*consumer city*” located in the desert near the coast. It will be a city of idolatry, excess luxury, and royalty, which will touch the political, economic, and religious spheres. Harlot Babylon is dynamically related to the ancient culture of Babylon and will function as a primary eschatological [end time] opponent to the city and people of Jerusalem as well as the worldwide body of Christ.

(Revelation 17:15,18 NASB) “...The waters which you saw where the prostitute sits are peoples and multitudes, and nations and languages. 18 The woman whom you saw is the great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth”

(Revelation 18:1-3 NASB) “She has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird. 3 For all the nations have fallen because of the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed acts of sexual immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich from the excessive wealth of her luxury.”

(Revelation 18:11,17-19 NASB) “And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her [during her destruction], because no one buys their cargo any more 17 for in one hour such great wealth has been laid waste!’ And every shipmaster and every passenger and sailor, and all who make their living by the sea, stood at a distance, 18 and were crying out as they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, ‘What city is like the great city? 19 And they threw dust on their heads and were crying out, weeping and mourning, saying, ‘Woe, woe, the great city, in which all who had ships at sea became rich from her prosperity, for in one hour she has been laid waste!’”

(Revelation 18:23-24 NASB) “for your [Babylon the great] merchants were the powerful people of the earth, because all the nations were deceived by your witchcraft. 24 And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all who have been slaughtered on the earth.”

- d. The purpose of this teaching is to **introduce the idea that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia fits the biblical criteria for the identity of “Babylon the great”**. We have to remember that the storyline that we’re following is a Middle Eastern centric storyline. We’re also going to approach this study with the understanding that **Antichrist Empire will be Islamic and emerge from the Middle East**. This point is important because of the harlot cities, dynamic relationship with the beast (**Revelation 17:3**). The following points will show how Saudi Arabia fits the requirements of **Revelation 17 and 18**.

II. A Literal Megacity in the Desert, Close to the Coast, and a Consumer City

- a. **A literal megacity - Revelation 17:18** tells us that “Babylon the great” is a literal city. The Greek word used for city, “*polis*”, means city or town. This great harlot is referred to over and over again as a “great city”. The Greek word used for great, “*me-gas*”, speaks of something’s external space or dimensions related to its “*largeness*” or “*loudness*”. The kingdom of Saudi Arabia (and cities within it) fit the criteria for a “*literal megacity*”. This point disqualifies theories that don’t see great city as a literal city.
- i. Perhaps this literal city could be Mecca (the spiritual capital of the Muslim world), or the emerging cities of King Abdullah Economic City (KAEC), or NEOM (meaning “new future”).
 - ii. We have to understand that “Mecca” is the heart of the Islamic world. It’s far reaching influence over the kings, nations, and peoples of the earth is unmatched by other cities.
 - iii. Saudi Arabia is the primary proponent for the spread of a radical Islam (Whabbism/Salafism – A Sunni reformation movement to restore Islam to it’s most extreme and literal early practices. Al-Qaeda, ISIS, and the Taliban were birthed out of Salifi thought.)
- b. **In the desert close to the coast** – John is carried away “*into the wilderness*” [gk. *eremos* – solitary, lonely, uninhabited place; desert] (**Revelation 17:3**) to see this “*harlot woman*”. There’s no reason to interpret wilderness here as an allegory, we should understand it to mean a literal desert, which Saudi Arabia clearly fits. We also find out in **Revelation 18:17-19** that the city is close to the coast, because those who “*make their living by sea*” mourn the demise of the “great city”. These two points immediately disqualify many theories related to non-costal cities that are not located in the desert.
- i. Mecca about 300 miles away from the coast of the red sea, which might be considered close enough for the shipmasters to “*stand at a distance*” and look upon the city burning (**Revelation 17:18**). However emerging cities like KAEC, and NEOM will be costal cities.
- c. **Consumer city** – A consumer city is a city that mostly consumes from other cities/nations. **Revelation 18:11-13** tells us that when the “great city” is destroyed, the “*merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her because no one buys their cargo anymore*”. Saudi Arabia imports nearly everything other than oil. Merchants of the earth have already become incredibly wealthy from Saudi Arabia’s consumption.

(Revelation 18:11-13 NASB) “And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her, because no one buys their cargo any more— 12 cargo of gold, silver, precious stones, and pearls; fine linen, purple, silk, and scarlet; every kind of citron wood, every article of ivory, and every article made from very valuable wood, bronze, iron, and marble; 13 cinnamon, spice, incense, perfume, frankincense, wine, olive oil, fine flour, wheat, cattle, sheep, and cargo of horses, carriages, slaves, and human lives.”

- i. **The cargo of human lives** – The last-days Babylon will be a city of slavery, most of which may be Jews and Christians. Currently, about 1/3 of the population of Saudi Arabia are foreign workers that are often treated as slaves, and sometimes even worse.

- III. A city of idolatry, excess luxury, and royalty, which will touch the political, economic, and religious spheres
- a. A city of idolatry – The bible refers to this city as the “*mother of prostitutes & abominations*” (**Revelation 17:5**). This terminology infers that this will be the greatest (or most effective) city of “spiritual prostitution”, and abomination that the earth has ever seen. Over 2 million Muslims make the pilgrimage to Mecca each year to circle the Kaaba (a square structure Muslims believe to be the earthly throne of Allah which can take away their sin). Not only is Mecca a home to the false religion of Islam, but also the Kaaba has ancient pagan roots with a deep history in idolatry. Mecca is the primary city that controls the hearts and minds of the majority Middle Eastern peoples.
 - b. Excess Luxury – **Revelation 18:3** describes the harlot Babylon as a city of excess luxury. The bible is clear that “*the love of money is the root of sorts of evil*” (**1 Timothy 6:10**). Due to the production of oil in Saudi Arabia, the royal family (consisting of over 15,000 family members) has been known for it’s excess luxury and wealth. The entire family is said to have a net worth of around 1.4 trillion dollars and they are not shy about spending that on personal homes, cars, gambling, and other luxuries.
 - c. Royalty – The harlot is clothed in purple and scarlet and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls (**Revelation 17:4**), which are components that speak of royalty. The “nation” of Saudi Arabia is actually a royal monarchy run by the “house of Saud”. The king holds absolute political power, which trickles down into every part of Saudi Arabian society. The monarchy heavily influences the entire “nation’s” functionality.
 - d. Political Sphere – The bible refers to this city one who “*reigns over the kings of the earth*” (**Revelation 17:18**), and causes the kings of the earth to commit acts of immorality with her (**Revelation 18:3**). The point is, this city has an influence over the global political sphere, and specifically the kings (political leaders of the nations). The past few generations, no other entity has given even a fraction of the money that the Saudi royals have given to the past several American presidents. The amount of influence Saudi Arabia has quietly held the nations under is quite troubling on many levels, regardless if it is the “great city” or not.
 - e. Economic Sphere – The “great cities” material excess is what will fuel her seduction over the economic leaders of the earth. Influencers and merchants will flock to “great city” city for economic gain but will be deceived by the cities witchcraft/manipulation [gk. *pharmakeia* – sorcery, the use of administering drugs intermingled with psychedelics] (**Revelation 18:23**). The “*great men of the earth*” will be seduced by the “sorcery”. I believe the emergence of the new cities in Saudi Arabia of KAEC and NEOM will be instrumental in the seduction of world economic leaders.
 - f. Religious Sphere – The end of the age “great harlot city” will function as a religious capital of the earth. The false religion and idolatry that her inhabitants practice will impact the kings, peoples, & multitudes, and nations and tongues (**Revelation 17:2,5**). Within the past 40 to 50 years Saudi Arabia has spent well over 100 Billion dollars to spread Islam (wahhabism) throughout the earth. No other religious campaign has come anywhere close to this type of spending. This is a huge reason why Islam is the fastest recorded growing religion in the earth.
 - i. The annual budget of the Southern Baptist International Missions Board (The largest protestant missionary organization in the world is \$300 million a year. By comparison this shows that Saudi Arabia has spent the equivalent of the IMB’s entire annual budget every three weeks for over 30 years.

- IV. A primary eschatological opponent to the city and people of Jerusalem as well as the worldwide body of Christ.
- a. Due to the destruction to the nation of Israel caused by the Babylonians, Babylon has become a primary symbol for the opponents of God’s people. The reason this “end times city” is referred to as “Babylon the great”, isn’t because we’ll see the nation of Babylon revived from the ashes, but to point out, that the city will be characterized by the same things ancient Babylon was characterized by, namely; idolatry and severe opposition to the people of God including slavery and persecution.
 - b. **Revelation 17 and 18** highlight that the end time harlot will be “**drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus**”, “**in her will be found the blood of prophets, and of all who have been slain on the earth**”. Though the Antichrist and his empire will take persecution and martyrdom of the Jews and saints to the most extreme level the earth has ever seen, “*the great city*” will lay the political and religious framework for him to do so. During the decades leading up to the Great Tribulation, we will begin to see the rage of the nations specifically directed at God and His people (**Psalm 2**).
 - c. Not only has Saudi Arabia been the greatest financier of the Palestinian Intifada (The Palestinian uprising against the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Jerusalem), but the dangerous ideologies of wahhabism spread though the funding of Saudi Arabia has opened a wide the door for almost every radical Islamic jihadi organization in the last century.

V. The Demise of the “Great City”

- a. We know the fall of the “great city” takes place in two phases. Phase 1 is at the beginning of the Great Tribulation when the Beast and his coalition of nations will overthrow and burn her capital city (**Revelation 17:16**). The second phase takes place during the pouring out of the 6th bowl at the tail end of the Great Tribulation (**Revelation 18**).

(Revelation 14:8 NASB) “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 sexual immorality.”

(Revelation 17:16 NASB) “And the ten horns which you saw, and the beast, these will hate the prostitute and will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire.”

- b. Currently, throughout the Middle East there is some tension among Muslims toward Saudi Arabia and the royal family. Those who strive to obey the tenants of Islam are not interested in a monarchy, but seek to restore an Islamic Government called a Caliphate. Many Islamists would love nothing more than to see a Middle Eastern Islamic Caliphate take out the monarchy of Saudi Arabia in order to control the kingdom’s oil wealth.
 - i. Wahhabism is the radical form of Sunni Islam of which Saudi Arabia is the “*capital city of*”. Wahhabi Muslims view Shi’a Muslims as the worst kind of “*infidels*”. Iran leads the Shi’a world and has a deep rivalry with Saudi Arabia. A catastrophic conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia is considered to be inevitable.
- c. An even larger thread to Saudi Arabia is the nation of Turkey. There is an emerging desire among the Turks to revive the Caliphate and win back their former dominion (The Ottoman Empire). If we dig into more biblical prophecy related to the Antichrist and his kingdom, we can see that there’s much evidence for Turkey to be the epicenter of the emergence of the Antichrist (**Ezekiel 38-39**). **Ezekiel 38** mentions Iran, as one of the nations that will partner with the Antichrist, so it’s no surprise that an Iranian and Turkish alliance would turn their attention toward Saudi Arabia (when this happens it’s a MAJOR sign of the times).