

Seven Keys to Identifying Mystery Babylon in Revelation

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From Fear and Fascination to Faith and Facts

My first encounter with the book of Revelation was fear. Who didn't get a few chills running down their spine about the number 666, the "mark of the beast," the seven plagues and this dramatic portrayal of the endtime? That fear kept me from wanting to know more about this book, though I was drawn to it.

Then I stumbled across a study that made an intelligent versus fanciful media-hyped approach to the book. It addressed it as a coded message, but written to the first century church who were part of its history and time. That evidence focused on the date of the book. It raised and answered the question, was it written pre or post A.D. 70?

Thirdly, an investigation of the internal evidence and alignment with other texts as commentary overruled the temptation to rely on imagination and the media. This was one of the most enlightening and satisfying decisions in my quest to understand the message of Revelation. What follows are a few keys that were convincing to me.

What Is A Mystery?

A mystery is not something which cannot be known, but simply that which is not known until it is revealed. The seven points in this article are now a mystery, but if you read further, they will become manifest to you.

In Revelation, "Babylon" is a code word for the mystery city. The book is neither about ancient Babylon nor modern day Iraq. Babylon was used as a sign to disguise in military-type code, the identity of the city. Why? It's because this city was marked for destruction. The political climate of the day made it extremely dangerous to speak openly of destroying this city, (Acts 6:14) especially by Christians who were viewed as its chief enemies. The preaching of Jerusalem's impending destruction led to Stephen's martyrdom, (Acts 7).

Its connection with ancient Babylon was its moral decay and idolatry. Ancient Babylon's fall was precipitated by their pride and disrespect for God, the persecution of God's people and the profaning of the temple's holy vessels. Thus Belshazzar's feast led to the demise of his kingdom. Hence the term *Mystery Babylon*.

1. "The Great City, --Where The Lord Was Crucified)

Further identifying *Mystery Babylon* as the great city (Revelation 17:18; 18:10), leads us to clue number one. The great city of Revelation is identified as the city *spiritually called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.*" (Revelation 11:8)

Besides the actual city, there is only one city in the Bible ever referred to as Sodom. It is Jerusalem, (Deuteronomy 32:32; Isaiah 1:10; Ezekiel 16:53, 56). The description, *where also our Lord was crucified* is strong evidence pointing to Jerusalem. Further, it could not be that a prophet perish outside of Jerusalem, Luke 13:33. Jerusalem was called the city of the great King. (Matthew 5:35) To the Jews it was the greatest city in the world.

2. The Golden Cup of Abominations

The imagery of the filled cup of iniquity indicates that God's period of longsuffering had run its course. Genesis 15:16 shows why God expelled the Amorites from the land in order that Israel might inherit Canaan. The reason he did not do so immediately was because the *iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full*. Their cup of sin yet had room for more and did not run its course until the time of the Exodus.

Jesus spoke to the people of Jerusalem warning them that they would fill up the measure of their father's guilt in killing the prophets. See point #3. Paul says they had filled up the measure of their sins and would experience the coming wrath. (1 Thessalonians 2:14-16).

3. God Would Avenge All the Righteous Blood Shed on Earth By Jerusalem.

Mystery Babylon was guilty of shedding the blood of the apostles and prophets, (Revelation 18:20). However, God avenged the blood of the apostles and prophets. Not only was their blood be avenged, but God avenged all the blood shed on the earth on *Mystery Babylon*, (v. 24).

Jesus predicted the same for Jerusalem. In Matthew 23:34-37, Jerusalem is charged with the blood guilt of all the righteous blood shed on the earth up to that time. Jesus would send more wise men, scribes and prophets whom he said they would scourge in their synagogues and persecute from city to city until he destroyed Jerusalem. It therefore matches perfectly with this description.

4. The "Mystery Babylon" Was Once a Queen

This identifies the city as having a covenant relationship with God. Neither ancient Rome, nor any other modern city could appropriately be styled as God's wife. Through the Old Covenant, God was married to Jerusalem, (Jeremiah 2:14). Because of her unfaithfulness, God threatens divorce. While *Mystery Babylon* claims to be a queen, she is widowed. (Revelation 18:7)

5. The Antithesis of the Two Cities

The contrast of the two cities in Revelation is a strong clue to the identity of *Mystery Babylon*. After the great city, *Mystery Babylon* is destroyed, God blesses a New Jerusalem. That implies an Old Jerusalem. This is the same antithesis running throughout the New Testament expressed in covenantal terms. (See Galatians 4:24-26; Hebrews 8:6-13; 12:18-23). The new Jerusalem however is not an earthly city but one which comes down out of heaven prepared as a bride adorned for her husband, (Revelation 21:1-3).

Paul writes that the church is the bride of Christ, 1 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:23-31, Hebrews 12:22, 23). The new holy city Jerusalem, takes the position as bride while the former adulterous wife receives death by fire.

6. Come Out of Her My People

The call to God's people to come out of *Mystery Babylon*" (Revelation 18:4) further aligns with the ancient city of Jerusalem. Prior to its destruction, Jesus warned that his disciples should flee the city to avoid its plagues of destruction, famine and death. (Matthew 24:15-17; Luke 21:20-22).

7. Trodden Down of the Gentiles

In Luke 21:24, Jesus remarks that Jerusalem would be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles were fulfilled. Unfortunately, today, many believe the Gentiles are rulers over the people of God. This is impossible as that period ended in A.D. 70 when Rome destroyed Jerusalem. It was the time when all things written were fulfilled, coming to pass before that generation passed away, (Luke 21:22, 32). As old Jerusalem was once called the faithful and holy city, John prophesied that it was measured for destruction, (Revelation 11:2).

Old Jerusalem Is A Perfect Match

Everything said about Jerusalem in the gospels, is symbolically described for *Mystery Babylon* in the book of Revelation. There are more contrasts and parallels but these should at least get one thinking.

Fanciful and colorful charts as those presented by John Hagee and others will forever fail to properly identify the *Mystery Babylon* as long as they are pointed in the future and toward some city or nation that has no antithesis with old Jerusalem. Further, a modern or present day Jerusalem, does not descend from heaven and can never be the holy city of Revelation 21.

The message and meaning of Revelation seems best and most easily understood when one values the *shortly to come to pass, time is at hand* time parameter of the message keeping it within a contemporary, historical setting of its first century hearers, (Revelation 1:1, 3). It may not frighten us as much, but it certainly encourages us with the message of faith, confidence in God's sovereign power and victory over the forces of evil.

William Bell has been a student and teacher of fulfilled Bible prophecy since 1979. To learn more about fulfilled Bible prophecy order a copy of *The Re-Examination*. [Click here](#) to order now.