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The American Economic Colossus: A Foreshadow of Endtime Babylon or Literal Fulfillment?

– PART III –



Is America mentioned in prophecy? Quite a few books have been written on the topic. For some it seems difficult to imagine that the world's present-day superpower would not be mentioned — a world potentate that exists in a time that many scholars in Bible prophecy consider to be the endtimes. Wouldn't the US play a major role in such a time?

Many do see America mentioned in the Bible. There are quite a few theories. An increasingly prominent interpretation among them identifies America as being the final and literal Babylon the Great mentioned in Revelation 18. And so we have been leading up to answer these questions in this three-part series:

- Is America a foreshadow of endtime Babylon depicted in Revelation 18?

- [Is America] its actual literal fulfillment?

- Are there parallels to be found with ancient Israel and Judah, who were punished for their sins and idolatries?

To this point in the series, we have concluded that the same (if not more severe) conditions of oppression and economic slavery exist in America today for which Israel, Judah and ancient Babylon were severely judged. These

are heinous conditions in God's eyes. After all, Christ came to free the imprisoned and the oppressed (Luke 4:18).

We also concluded that the United States is regarded as the major money center and economic hub of the world at this time. This is the same position that Babylon the Great of Revelation 18 will hold. Apart from these two pivotal conclusions that align with Babylon the



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Great, we also provided evidence that a trend of economic deterioration appears evident in America. America's position in the world will definitely prove to be on the downside if this trend isn't soon reversed.

Let's continue with our investigation. On one point we can be reasonably sure: America is not the literal Babylon the Great of Revelation 18. While we will yet present our reasons for this conclusion, this answer may seem like a welcome relief. But it doesn't give any reason for comfort, as we will yet learn.

A World Without the US?

To begin, we must first settle at least two more foundational questions: First, if the US were to experience a significant disciplining for its economic and financial excesses (greed and mammon idolatry, as was the case in Israel and Judah thousands of years before), would this topple the entire world financial system? The answer al-

most certainly is yes. At the very least, it would cause severe economic and financial troubles in the rest of the world.

Supporting this conclusion, consider these facts about America in relation to global economic and financial structures as they exist today.

1. At the present rate that the US is falling into indebtedness to the rest of the world, its annual external deficit will hit \$1 trillion (annual current US dollars) in less than two years, according to some forecasts. Even though such an extreme may not happen, it is true that a lot of US dollars are flooding the world's markets and treasuries every year. How extreme is this situation? Consider that the US (accounting for less than 5 percent of the world's population) is responsible for approximately three-quarters of world net borrowing. Sparing readers the detailed explanations, it means that when the day of financial reckoning comes for America, it will likely be transmitted to the rest of the world.

2. A recent report states that the international positions of reporting banks around the world has reached the \$20 trillion mark as of the third quarter-end of 2004.¹ Not only does it represent an increase of more than 50 percent in less than two years (an extremely reckless pace) it also highlights how

quickly financial systems across the world are being intertwined. It is an indicator of the rapid spread around the globe of a US dollar-centric financial boom and a global inflationary bubble of money and credit. Just how rapid is this trend? International lending will have more than doubled in the first five years of this third millennium — growing by more than the entire growth of prior human history!

3. Global securities wealth has boomed in recent decades, recently again approaching the \$100 trillion mark. As such, it represents almost a doubling in world securities wealth relative to people's annual income levels in less than 10 years. That's a lot of securities ... and, again, a lot of US dollars. According to various indices, stocks and bonds represent some 40 percent of that amount, which is certainly an outsized amount for a country that accounts for approximately 27 percent of the world's economy.

4. Although difficult to imagine, the \$250 trillion mark for global derivatives markets (a complex financial arena that few people understand or know very much about)² had recently been reached, almost tripling in notional value in a period of only two years. Less than 10 major money-center banks in the US control this market,



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which represents a value some six times the size of the entire world's annual income.

We see that the world is flooded with dollar assets, undergirding global interconnectedness (all significantly involving America) and accelerating forward as never before in human history. It represents a potentially vulnerable position for the US, its investors, and the entire world. Global monetary and economic affairs of the US are deeply enmeshed with the world. If America were to stumble some day, the world will face severe hardship. In fact, such a development could very credibly be the start or part of the economic chaos of the scope prophesied to occur during the Tribulation.

The Endtime Economic Oppressor

Just what are world conditions supposed to be like when Babylon the Great strides the earth? The prophet Habakkuk sheds some light on our questions. Although his prophecies were first directed to the Babylon of his day, they clearly also had an endtime application. The Lord answered him, "For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false" (Habakkuk

2:3). Following this verse, we see the character of the Antichrist of the "end" period described. Greed and economic oppression are the prominent characteristics portrayed.

"The wicked foe pulls all of them up with hooks, he catches them with his net, he gathers them up in his dragnet; and so he rejoices and is glad. Therefore he sacrifices to his net and burns incense to his dragnet for by his net he lives in luxury and he enjoys the choicest food" (Habakkuk 1:15-16). He (or the world system, the economic Babylon of Revelation 18) is a trapper. Moreover, "he is greedy as the grave and like death is never satisfied, he gathers to himself all the nations and takes captive all the peoples" (Habakkuk 2:5-6). This endtime regime is motivated by greed and is global in span as it takes "all the nations" and "all the peoples" captive. "Woe to him who piles up stolen goods and makes himself wealthy by extortion!" (verse 6). "Woe to him who builds his realm by unjust gain, to set his nest on high, to escape the clutches of ruin!" (verse 6). Habakkuk's prophecies could not provide a more accurate description of the world's emerging rul-

ing structure of our times and perhaps yet in the future. It is built upon greed, oppression and extortion, taking the world captive through a financial and economic trap, as well as other means.

The conditions outlined by Habakkuk are already here. But could America alone fulfill this picture of the oppressive regime of the last days? To this point, this is not the case, nor does it seem likely. America has not yet taken the entire world and all its peoples captive. This will not happen without the agreement of other key countries around the world such as China, European countries, and Russia.

We already have highlighted some of the longer-running developments that might lead America to a greatly weakened economic and financial state on the world stage. (See Part I) While the US may still be a world military power, its "soft power" — America's economic and financial influence — stands to be impaired. Quite frankly, the world cannot afford America's religion of materialistic excess and beggar-thy-neighbor's finance for much longer and will not tolerate its consumptive excesses indefinitely. If America indeed were to be considered as Babylon



the Great, would it make sense that this world-reaching behemoth described in Revelation 18 would also be the world's greatest debtor? This doesn't follow as it is clearly stated that Babylon is the source of wealth for the kings of the earth, not debt and impoverishment.

America and Israel: Prophetic Implications

No doubt, America's colossal financial role in today's world makes it a nation to watch in the context of endtime developments. Whether or not the Bible mentions her specifically, America most definitely is a pivotal actor on the last-days world stage. We know that to be the case because the world is definitely witnessing the period that the Bible refers to as the "last days." Israel, the Bible's timepiece, ushered in this last period when it resurfaced as a nation in 1948. And, most certainly, America has had an outsized impact upon the trends and developments in the world since that time. It definitely was, and still is, the world's only superpower (both economically and militarily), similar in influence as was ancient Rome and the British Empire. No major geopolitical event happens without its involvement in some way.

At the very least, America has played a large role in the recent prophetic timeline for Israel as well as worldwide Jewry. As all Bible prophecy either links to or circumnavigates the timeline of the Hebrews, we can take some clues from conditions applying to the Jews today. Approximately

half of the world's Jewry currently lives in the United States, a nation that is still Israel's main protector. Another aspect that may play a role is the fact that prominent Jews have an inordinately large role in American commerce—even a significant influence in global financial and economic circles.

Says one observer, "Historically, anti-Semitism has fluctuated with the boom and bust of business cycles. Jews have long been scapegoats during economic downturns, as a small minority with outsized political and financial influence."³ It may be a contributing reason therefore, that anti-Semitism is again rising globally. However, it must be stated that all anti-Semitism of whatever stream has occultic roots. Satan, in his epic campaign to annihilate Jews would surely not overlook the strategy of using some of them to hold prominent roles in the world's endtime plunge into an economic and financial trap that will play into the agenda of the Antichrist. In fact, some political activists claim a clear connection between world globalization and Jewish influence, so much so, that anti-globalization protestors sometimes brandish the swastika.⁴ The vast majority of Jews who hold such prominent positions are US citizens."

Next, we must face a tragic fact. The Bible clearly says that all nations (naming only a few possible exceptions, of which none can be interpreted to be America) come against Israel, even fighting against the Lord of Hosts at the end of the Great

Tribulation. We can only conclude that America at that time will no longer be a protector of Israel. Why? We cannot know with any certainty. She may simply have abandoned Israel, come to some kind of demise, or is no longer strong enough to be Israel's defender. Whatever the case, it remains logical to conclude that America is not a supporter of Israel as Armageddon approaches. Something will occur that causes the removal of America's protection.

Then what will happen to almost half of the world's Jews who reside in America? Here we discover a significant reason America today is not literal Babylon. It is very unlikely that Israel will be part of the final, literal Babylon the Great, nor is it likely that prominent, wealthy Jews will be allowed an uninhibited role in this system as they do today. How could it be otherwise as Israel and Jews will be under heavy persecution as never experienced before in history? It's the time of "Jacob's Trouble." This fact has clear implications for America. As mentioned, Jews at present do enjoy an outsized role in American and global commerce and finance. This will likely no longer be the case in the last half of the Tribulation when literal Babylon the Great is on the stage and with Jews under heavy persecution. That fact alone can be taken to indicate a major disruption in US business affairs at that time ... certainly so if the majority of the American Jews have not already left for Israel by then.



Babylon the Great is not necessarily a physical city (though it may certainly have a city center). Rather, it seems more plausible that it is a system, in this case the economic trade and financial system dominated by the present or future high-income countries of the world.

The Bible clearly indicates that the Jews will return to Israel before, during and after the time of “Jacob’s Trouble.” All of the above can mean only one thing. Many Jews residing in the US will likely have already decamped to Israel before Armageddon approaches. What events will have occurred to precipitate these conditions? Why would America abandon Israel? Why would so many Jews, living in relative comfort in the US, choose to leave at some point? Again, we only speculate as to the answer.

Why America is not Babylon

As mentioned, some believe that America is the literal Babylon the Great, the entity that eventually gets a special measure of God’s wrath at the end of the Great Tribulation. There are many reasons America is not Babylon the Great. In addition to the broad arguments already presented, here is a brief list of additional points supporting this conclusion:

1. The Bible indicates that someday the center of world commerce will be moved to a new single location — Babylonia. “Where are they taking the basket?” I asked the angel who was speaking to me. He replied, “To the country of Babylonia to build a house for it. When it is

ready, the basket will be set there in its place” (Zechariah 5:10-11). This verse alone rules out the possibility that America will be the Babylon of Revelation 18. America certainly will not be moved to Babylonia during the time of “Jacob’s Trouble.” However, it is possible that the center of this global system could be moved to this location.

2. Some prophecy commentators hold the view that Babylon the Great of Revelation 18 is a city — in other words, a physical place. Some go so far as to even conclude Babylon must therefore be New York City. Certainly, these could all qualify as “types” of the final literal manifestation, which yet occurs in the future. But, in fact, Babylon the Great is never called a “city” in the Bible. To be technically correct, the “economic” Babylon is called the “great city” six times in the book of Revelation. It is never called a “city,” only a “great city.”

In the Greek, the word combination “great city” is found only 10 times in the New Testament— six times for economic Babylon, three times for religious Babylon and once for the New Jerusalem. Each of its uses leaves open the interpretation that “great city” means something bigger than a common city; perhaps a system, organization, or a unique structure. Ancient Greek

had no word for “system” or “organization” as we understand the terms today. In former times, a city was the closest thing there was to an organized economic entity. These words, or concepts similar to them, are not found in the entire Bible. The closest word combination that is apparent is “kingdom of nations” (Isaiah 13:1). Babylon the Great is not necessarily a physical city (though it may certainly have a city center). Rather, it seems more plausible that it is a system, in this case the economic trade and financial system dominated by the present or future high-income countries of the world.

3. Additional statements about Babylon the Great in the description found in Revelation 18 obviously rule out America as Babylon the Great. There are a number of them. Here are just two: It is stated “Rejoice saints, and apostles, and prophets. God has judged her for the way she treated you” (verse 20). Then in verse 24, “In her was found the blood of prophets and of the saints, and of all who have been killed on the earth.” In no way is America responsible for “all who have been killed on earth” nor is it (alone or otherwise) responsible for how apostles and prophets have been treated. America hasn’t been around that long, nor has it existed through-



out the ages. What has existed all that time is the “spirit” behind Babylon, the same spirit that enervates the present day world system of finance and commerce as it did in the day of Tyre and ancient Babylon.

4. A number of respected prophecy scholars believe the ancient city of Babylon will be rebuilt. We will not examine this position here. However, this interpretation, if it is correct, certainly precludes America being Babylon the Great.

5. If America is thought to be Babylon the Great, then why wasn't the Great British Empire a better candidate for this position in the days of its prime? Britain had a much bigger realm — “upon which the sun never set,” it was said — than the US today. Historians generally agree that Britain has left a much bigger stamp upon the world than America has to date. Moreover, Britain even had a bigger influence upon world trade and finance in relative terms at its height of power. The great Gilded Age of the late 19th century witnessed a globalization that some economists argue was even greater than today's era. If so, why would the very capstone of last-days economic idolatry that is called “Babylon the Great” be a smaller manifestation of this kind than has ever occurred before in human history?

6. A more recent argument pinning the tail of Babylon upon the US is this one: As America is now occupying Iraq, they reason that since all former world kingdoms mentioned by Daniel ruled the area of Babylon, that there-

fore the US reveals itself to be the final seventh kingdom. This argument falls flat on a number of points. The most obvious reason this argument is incorrect is that the area comprising Babylon is not Israel and therefore not a marker of the prophetic timeline of the Jews. If the theory were correct, again, why isn't Britain considered one of the world kings mentioned by Daniel ... or even the Ottoman Empire? Iraq was under British rule after its invasion in 1917 (up to 1941) following the breakdown of the Ottoman Empire. After World War I, Iraq was under British mandate and control for more than 30 years. Using this reasoning, both the Ottoman and British empires should have been part of Daniel's prophetic timeline, which they are certainly not.

7. America today accounts for a large portion of world trade, yet it remains a fraction. By no means does it represent the majority of world trade. Babylon the Great most apparently depicts an entity that accounts for the majority if not all of the world's trade. Similarly, the final events of the endtimes involve the entire world, not just America. Yes, America may have an inordinate influence upon the world. But it is not the entire world, nor does it speak for the entire world economic system as will Babylon the Great.

Thoughts to Ponder

We can safely conclude that America is not Babylon the Great. Yet, that conclusion leaves little room for comfort. It can be

still true that America is deeply infiltrated and compromised by the ancient spirit of Babylon. Like no other nation before it, America is the best fitting foreshadow of future Babylon to date. Just as the Roman Catholic Church of today may be the closest type of Mystery Babylon the Great (the religious whore of Revelation 17) that the world has produced to this point, the final literal fulfillment still likely lies ahead in the Great Tribulation.

As already documented, America is clearly the major financial and trade nexus of the world. The world is intertwined with its financial tentacles and its massive “bubble money” as no other nation or group of nations. This is similar in position to that of Babylon of Revelation. Coupling that reality with the fact that these are the last days, we must then also conclude that America will have played the key role in promoting the commercial culture, systems and infrastructure that give rise to the final form of Babylon the Great around the world. America, in her popular greed, has served the purposes of the spirit of the Antichrist. But, again, that does not make her Babylon the Great. At the same time, she is also hindering the purposes of the Antichrist because she has been the protector of re-born Israel to this point.

America is still widely considered to be the most openly religious nation of what the world calls the “Christian West” (based on historical societal associations with Christianity). But the

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current popular version of what is called Christianity in North America is new — prosperity for all, and as certain reward and proof of Christian living. Not one of the original 12 apostles had been familiar with this form. They all took up their crosses and shared in the sufferings of Christ. What does our Lord think of America's current bi-polar condition ... its hypocrisy? Will He be long-suffering? At what point will America be "weighed on the scales and found wanting" (Daniel 5:27). Is the beginning economic slide being witnessed already a form of disciplining?

Rather than inquiring whether the US is mentioned in the Bible, we might better ask why it is not. Clearly, as already presented, the US does play a pivotal role in endtime world developments. Yet, it does not get any unambiguous or specific mention in the Bible. Certainly, it is not a supporter of Israel by the end of the Great Tribulation. We can only conclude some extremely difficult conditions and events lie ahead for America and the world.

As already shown in this article series, it is virtually impossible that America would experience a major economic or financial crisis without direly affecting the entire world (or vice versa). Recognizing that a financial/economic earthquake will most likely be the trigger or

at least play a major role for the onset of the Great Tribulation we can reasonably speculate whether America's beginning economic slide that we already sense today will be one and the same contributing development. Without a doubt, current world imbalances in this arena are already of a scope that could trigger the troubles described for the Great Tribulation. After all, it is for the Antichrist's solutions to global economic and political instabilities that will win him the world's favor.

There is little cause for complacency on the part of Christians. Admittedly, we really can not be certain about God's remaining plans for America and her sister countries in the world. The conditions of oppression and enslavement in North American are every bit as terrible as was the case in Judah and Israel. They were punished severely. America is the closest forerunner or type of that future Babylon the Great to date and in some respects may even be its greatest architect. At the same time, America still holds up the biggest banner of Christianity to the world ... though it may be a very warped one at that. Will God first discipline America and her siblings as he did Israel, Judah and Babylon of old? Or will He judge? If so, America will suffer an economic downfall, a development that will surely distress the en-

tire world, possibly acting as a catalyst for the chaos of the Tribulation Period. Or will none of these things happen? If so, America will indeed become incorporated as the likely cornerstone of the future global commercial Babylon.

Which outcome occurs is entirely in God's hands. However, we can pray. And, even though America is not Babylon the Great at this time, it is true that the spirit of Babylon does infuse our culture. In this sense at least, we must "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" (Revelation 18:4). ^{MC}

ENDNOTES

- 1 That observation is a primary cause for some to believe that America actually is or will be the "Babylon" that is profiled in Revelation 18. This is not my view, though, undoubtedly, any country with a large economy at the time of the events concerning Babylon the Great, will be a major contributor to the global conditions depicted in Revelation 18.
- 2 US Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, NIPA and International Transactions statistics.
- 3 Niall Ferguson, "Sinking Globalization," *Foreign Affairs* March/April 2005, pg. 70.