

No Such Thing as “Mystery Babylon”

Quit Calling it That!

The title “Mystery Babylon” is the result of an unwarranted capitalization of the word “Mystery” in Revelation 17:5 in the King James Bible. The New King James translators kept it in capital letters, but separated it from the title “Babylon the Great” by a comma. All other Bible translations [that I have seen so far] do not capitalize the word “Mystery” and do a better job at translating this verse. For example:

“And on her forehead was written a name of mystery: “Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth’s abominations.” [ESV]

“On her forehead was written a secret name: BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND DETESTABLE THINGS OF THE EARTH.” [ISV]

And on her forehead a name was written, a mystery: “BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.” [NASB95 & 2020]

It should never be referred to as “Mystery Babylon.” It should always be referred to as “Babylon the Great.” It is called Babylon the Great or a variation five additional times in the book of Revelation. It is never called “Mystery Babylon.”

- Revelation 14:8: “Babylon...that great city”
- Revelation 16:19 “great Babylon”
- Revelation 18:2 “Babylon the great”
- Revelation 18:10 “that great city Babylon”
- Revelation 18:21 “that great city Babylon”

What does the Greek word *mystērion* mean?

In BDAG, "The most comprehensive and authoritative Greek-English dictionary for the New Testament and early Christian writings." it states that *mystērion* is:

"the unmanifested or private counsel of God, (God's) secret, the secret thoughts, plans, and dispensations of God ... which are hidden fr. human reason, as well as fr. all other comprehension below the divine level, and await either fulfillment or revelation to those for whom they are intended..."

What does the Bible say about *mystērion*?

An important principle of Biblical interpretation is to let Scripture interpret Scripture. Paul tells us the definition of *mystērion* in several passages such as:

Colossians 1:26-27: *"Even the **mystery** which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this **mystery** among the Gentiles; which is **Christ in you, the hope of glory:**"*

Ephesians 3:3-6: *"How that by revelation he made known unto me the **mystery**; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the **mystery** of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by **the Spirit**; That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel...And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the **mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:***

Romans 16:25-26 *"Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ,*

*according to the revelation of the **mystery**, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith:*

Other passages to look at are 1 Cor. 2:7; and Colossians 1:26-27.

Some of the mysteries that were unknown until Paul revealed them:

Romans 11:25-26 " *For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this **mystery**...that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.*"

1 Corinthians 15:51 "Behold, I shew you a **mystery**; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." [The Rapture]

Ephesians 3:4-6 "(Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the **mystery** of Christ)...That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:"

Ephesians 5:30-32 "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great **mystery**: but I speak concerning Christ and the church." [Marriage is type of Christ and the Church]

Colossians 1:26-27 "Even the **mystery** which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this **mystery** among the Gentiles; which is **Christ in**

you, the hope of glory:

So, a mystery is something that is hidden/unknown until God chooses to reveal it through his holy prophets and apostles.

Mystery in Revelation 17:5

In Greek, there are three grammatical genders—male, female and neuter. The word *mystērion* is a neuter noun and is modifying the word “name” which is also neuter. The name is a mystery. For it to be “Mystery Babylon” the word “mystery” would have to be an adjective describing Babylon and would need to be in the same gender. However, “mystery” is neuter and “Babylon” is feminine.

The mystery of the name written on her forehead isn't just “Babylon.” The entire name written on her forehead is “Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the Earth”

In verse 7, the angel tells John that he will tell him *“the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns.”*

The angel starts by revealing to him the mystery of the Beast that carries her. The majority is focused on the Beast—Revelation 17:8-14 & 16-17. There are two things he tells John about the woman who rides the beast. In verse 15, referring to verse one, the angel says *“The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.”* Then in verse 18, the angel says that *“the woman which thou sawest **is that great city**, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.”*

The angel also reveals the interaction between the Woman and the Beast in verse 16 *“And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.”*

Why Does it Matter?

A number of Bible teachers use the word “mystery” as permission to spiritualize Babylon, or give it a mystical or symbolic meaning. But the Biblical definition of “*mystērion*” does not allow for that. It simply means something that had been hidden up to the point where it was revealed by God through the Angel in Revelation. It doesn’t give us the right to give a different interpretation than was given by God in the Scripture passage itself.