

In This Same Way Babylon Will Sink, Never to Rise Again

Jeremiah's Eighth Symbolic Action 51: 59-64a

DIG: What was to be done with this message? Why? What message about Babylon was Seraiah to deliver to the exiles in Babylon? How is this scroll like the fate of Babylon? What overall picture of God do you get from this prophecy and the preceding ones? How is the Law of Double Reference used here?

REFLECT: How do you feel about God's retribution against evil? Did the people of Babylon have a chance to see YHVH (see Romans 1:18-23)? Are they without excuse? If you were to create a symbolic action for your spiritual condition right now what would it be? Down the drain? In the desert? Soaring with the eagles? Confused?

These prophecies were made in 594-593 BC during the eleven-year reign of Zedekiah

The one main point to Yirmeyahu's eighth symbolic action (what might be called a parable in action) is that it summarizes everything the prophet has said concerning his prophecy about Babylon.

This is the word ADONAI spoke through Yirmeyahu the prophet concerning Babylon and the land of the Babylonians (50:1):

This is the message Jeremiah the prophet gave to the staff officer Seraiah, the brother of Jeremiah's scribe Baruch (32:12), son of Neriah, the grandson of Mahseiah, when he went to Babylon with Zedekiah king of Judah in the fourth year of his reign (51:59). He was in charge of making sure that the provisions for King Zedekiah's trip to Babylon were in order. This was the same year of the plot to rebel against Babylon (see Eq - Judah to Serve Nebuchadnezzar). Zedekiah probably had to make the trip to explain away the plots. The chameleon king probably figured that if Hananiah's prophecy of a speedy return of the exiles from Babylon were true (see Et - The False Prophet Hananiah), it would be in his best interests to assure Nebuchadnezzar of his loyalty. Afterwards he was allowed to return to Judah and reign; but when Hananiah's prophecy turned out to be false, Zechariah would rebel more overtly later.

But here, once again we see *the Law of Double Reference*. This law observes the fact that often a passage of a block of Scripture is speaking of two different persons or two different events that are separated by a long period of time. In the passage itself they are blended into one picture, and the time gap between the two persons or two events is not presented by the text itself. The fact that a gap of time exists at all is known because of other Scriptures. But in that particular text itself the gap of time is not seen. A good example of this law is some of the prophecies of the TaNaKh regarding the First and Second Coming of **the Messiah**. Often these two events are blended into one picture with no indication that there is a gap at all. **Zechariah 9:9-10** is a good example of *The Law of Double Reference*. **Verse 9** is speaking of the First Coming, but **verse 10** is speaking of the Second Coming. These two comings are blended into one picture with no indication that there is a separation of time between them. Another example is **Isaiah 11:1-5**. **Verses 1-2** speak of the First Coming, while **verses 3-5** speak of the Second Coming. Again, the two are blended into one picture with no indication of a gap of time between the two. Because several of the prophetic passages follow this principle, it is good to know.

On the one hand, there was a **near historical** component to **Jeremiah's** prophecy because **a staff officer** was taking a new scroll to **Babylon** in the fourth year of **Zedekiah's** reign, and at that time **the king of Babylon** was **Nebuchadnezzar**. **Yirmeyahu** had written on a separate scroll about all the disaster that would come upon **Babylon** if she attacked **Judah** - all that had been recorded concerning **Babylon**. He said to **Seraiah**, "When you get to **Babylon**, see that you read all these words of this scroll aloud.

The audience that heard the reading was probably some of the exiles since it would have been extremely imprudent to declare such things openly in **Babylon** even if the event were some distance in the future.³¹⁰ Both the written scroll and the verbal message by **Seraiah** were a "word" from **the LORD**. Then **Jeremiah** added a third "word." **When you finish reading, tie a stone to it and throw it into the Euphrates. Then say, 'In this same way Babylon and her people will sink, never again to rise, because of the disasters I will bring upon her' (51:60-61 and 63-64a NLT).**"

Of all the things **Jeremiah** said or could have said, this was **his** last testimony to **his** people. It was a testimony that invited **Judah** to see the hidden power of **God** at work. **Babylon** would sink, facing a future with no Easter; while **Y'hudah** would rise. **Jeremiah** was told to **tie a stone to it and throw it into the Euphrates**, and when **he** obeyed, it symbolized **the Babylonian empire** that would also sink like that **stone**. The scroll was gone, but the promise of the scroll, and **ADONAI** who spoke through the scroll was still valid. No wonder the words of **Yirmeyahu** ended here. Nothing more needed to be said!³¹¹

But on the other hand, there was a **far eschatological** component to Yirmeyahu's prophecy when **Seraiah** said: **ADONAI, will destroy this place, so that neither people nor animals will live in it; it will be desolate forever (51:62)**. This did not happen when Cyrus captured Babylon in 539 BC (see **Ez - A Message Against Babylon**), but **Babylon** would be uninhabitable for **people** or **animals** during the messianic Kingdom (see the commentary on **Revelation Er - Babylon Will Never Be Found Again**) and continuing on into the Eternal State (see the commentary on **Revelation Fq - The Eternal State**).