

# In One Day Her Plagues Will Overtake Her: Death, Mourning and Famine

## 18: 6-8

**DIG:** How does God's perspective on Babylon differ from Babylon's self understanding? How does the law of retribution apply to Babylon the Great? Will her demise happen gradually or will it happen suddenly? Who judges Babylon? Why?

**REFLECT:** When has an important part of your life collapsed? What did others have to say about your demise? What perspective did the Lord bring to your fallen situation? What is the most important lesson you have learned from this passage? What actions will you take today based on this learning?

It will seem for a long time like **Babylon** will be getting away with killing the **LORD's** people. **Her** day, however, will come, and when it does, **she** will be dealt with ruthlessly. Those who offer no mercy will receive no mercy. It will be true justice.

**Babylon's** judgment is defined as the angel (**18:4a**) now speaks not to **John**, but to **God**. His call for vengeance to **give back to her as she has given (18:6a)**, parallels the prayers of the martyred Tribulation believers (**6:9-10**). The angel's prayer for justice is based on the law of retribution, which is the principle of **an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth (Matthew 5:38; Exodus 21:23-24; Leviticus 24:19-20; Deuteronomy 19:21)**. **Babylon** has ignored the grace given to **her**. It will be time for vengeance.<sup>390</sup> Speaking through Moses the prophet about the end times, **ADONAI** said: **It is mine to avenge; I will repay. In due time their foot will slip; their day of disaster is near and their doom rushes upon them (Deuteronomy 32:35)**.

The angel's request that **God pay her back double**, literally *double the double things, for what she has done (18:6b)*, means that **Babylon's** punishment should fit **her** crimes. **Double** has been **her** sin; **double** should be **her** punishment. **Babylon's** sins have been overflowing, like bricks of a *ziggurat*, they **are piled up to heaven (18:5)**. So the angel calls for **God's** judgment to be in equal measure. **Double** has the sense of fullness or completeness.

**Mix her a double portion from her own cup (18:6c)**. In the Torah, offenders were often required to pay **double** the restitution for their crimes (**Exodus 22:4-9**). The prophets note that Israel received double for her sins (**Isaiah 40:1-2; Jeremiah 16:18**).

**Jeremiah** prayed that **ADONAI** would bring on Israel's persecutors a day of disaster and destroy them with double destruction (**Jeremiah 17:18**). This will be poetic justice (see **Obadiah 13-16**). The cup of **God's** wrath (**14:10, 16:19, 18:6**), will be filled to the brim; when the last drop is poured in, it is passed to the lips of those who committed wickedness against His people. The Psalter rejoices, saying: **Babylon is doomed to destruction, happy is he who repays you for what you have done to the sons and daughters of Israel (Psalm 137:8-9)**. **God** will be right and just in what He will do (**Jeremiah 50:15, 29**).<sup>391</sup>

The prosperity of **Babylon** will blind her to **God's** judgment. The angel continued to speak to the **Lord**, saying: **Give her as much torture and grief as the glory and luxury she gave herself. In her heart she boasts when she says: I sit as queen; I am not a widow, and I will never mourn (18:7)**. The godless city will be filled with the proud and haughty. Her residents will declare her beauty, greatness, and glory over all the earth. They will think she is the **queen** and that she is married to the kings of the earth. As such, she is not a widow but a wealthy **queen** who has nothing to mourn about (**Isaiah 47:7-8; Zephaniah 2:15**). This will be one of His standards of judgment when He remembers **Babylon**: the great **grief** of the godly will be turned into glory, and the glory of the godless will be turned into great **grief**.<sup>392</sup>

Therefore, in one day her plagues will overtake her. **Babylon** was brought down in one day before, during the reign of king Belshazzar (**Daniel 5:1-30**). It will be the same in the last days. Her destruction will not be progressive. The wicked city will be destroyed instantly (**Isaiah 47:9; Jeremiah 50:31-32**). As the home of one-world government and global trade, **Babylon** will think she is very powerful. She will control powerful weapons and great armies. But compared to **God** who will judge her, her supposed strength will be worthless. What no earthly army can do, the **LORD** will accomplish in one day. First, the angel of death will pass over **Babylon**. Secondly, this city that just got through saying: **I will never mourn**, will mourn bitterly. And thirdly, this rich city will suddenly run out of food and experience **famine**.<sup>393</sup>

Lastly, she will be consumed by fire, because **ADONAI, God, her Judge, is mighty (18:8 CJB)**. No one can frustrate His plans, or keep Him from accomplishing what He purposes to do. Job said to the **LORD**: **I know that You can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted (Job 42:2)**. All the power of wicked men and demons will not be enough to deliver **Babylon** from **God's** judgment.<sup>394</sup> The Bible does not describe the source of such a devastating fire, but it surely will be no ordinary fire. It reminds us of the **burning sulfur** that rained down from heaven on **Sodom and Gomorrah** during Lot's day. When Lot looked down toward **Sodom and Gomorrah**, all he saw was **dense smoke rising from the land, like smoke from a furnace (Genesis 19:23-28)**. So it will be with **Babylon**.

Believing in **Jesus** cost the early believers dearly. It seemed unjust that they should lose everything when **ADONAI** was on their side. But as the book of **Revelation** circulated among the seven churches (**2:1-3:22**), it helped them to understand why **God** did not immediately save them from Roman persecution. **The Holy Spirit** reassured them that they had not been forgotten. One day, they would see evil destroyed in the most swift, decisive, and one-sided Campaign of all time. At that time all the martyrs of every age will be vindicated, and **the LORD's** salvation will win out over the empty promises of the world's fleeting pleasures.

Throughout **Revelation**, **Babylon the Great** symbolizes the entire world system that has set itself up against the kingdom of **the Lord**. One day, the world will be judged according to **God's** will for creation, and an end will come to all the debates and opinions of right and wrong, moral and immoral. On that **day**, it will be made clear that all the **judgments** of **ADONAI** are true and just (**19:2**).

**Revelation** warns us to be alert to the influence of evil. Through the media, we are constantly enticed to live for ourselves and to accept ungodliness from a world that is increasingly against **God**. To counter this, we should fix our hearts on the beauty of **Messiah** and boldly speak out about His greatness. He wants us to distance ourselves from the allure of the world and to embrace His salvation (**First John 2:15-17**). As we draw nearer to **ADONAI**, praise will erupt from our hearts. We will join with the heavenly hosts singing: **Salvation and glory and power to our God (19:1)**. Let us rejoice today in our assurance that **the Lord** will ultimately triumph over every power opposed to Him and His children..

*Thank you, **God**, for inviting me to the wedding feast of the Lamb. I eagerly await the day that you overthrow evil. Until that day, I will take my stand with you in confidence, knowing that the victory is Yours.*<sup>395</sup>