

Babylon Will Never Be Found Again

18: 21-23a

DIG: How does the Bible depict Babylon's destruction? What is the fate of those who seduce people into sin and away from faith in Christ?

REFLECT: When we realize the ultimate fate of the lost, how does God want that realization to affect us? There is plenty of sin in this world to hate, but do we view it with our Father's eyes? Do we love the sinner and hate the sin?

Another **mighty angel** (5:2, 10:1) now appeared in **John's** vision. In a dramatic act picturing **Babylon's** destruction, he **picked up a boulder the size of a large millstone and threw it into the sea (18:21a)**. The name **Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36)** means *oil press*, that is, a stone mill for grinding olives into pulp for their oil. Until quite recently the Arabs in the villages in Isra'el used such presses for the same purpose, and many of the millstones are still around. They are circular with a hole in the center about 9 inches square, the diameter averages about five feet, the thickness a foot and the weight is well over a ton.⁴⁰⁰

In one moment, like the millstone disappearing **into the sea**, **Babylon** will be gone. **Jeremiah** commanded a **scroll wrapped in stone** be thrown into the Euphrates River to symbolize the sinking of the city of **Babylon**. Then **Jeremiah** said to **Seraiah**: **When you get to Babylon, see that you read all these words aloud. Then say, "O God, you have said you will destroy this place, so that neither man nor animal will live in it; it will be desolate forever."** When you finish reading this scroll, tie a stone to it and throw it into the Euphrates. Then say, **"So will Babylon sink to rise no more because of the disaster I will bring upon her. And her people will fall"** (Jeremiah 51:61-64). Like **Jeremiah**, this **mighty angel** also casts a stone, the size of a large millstone, into the sea to depict how totally **Babylon** will disappear. **With such violence the great city of Babylon will be thrown down, never to be found again (18:21b)**. This expression occurs seven times with minor variations.

There are two places on the earth that will be inhabitable by humans during the **Great Tribulation**. While **Satan** is **bound and thrown into the Abyss for a thousand years (20:2-3)**, and **the beast and the false prophet** smolder in the **lake of burning sulfur (20:10)**, demons in animal form are confined to **Babylon** (see my commentary on **Isaiah Dk - Babylon**,

the Jewel of Kingdoms, will be Overthrown), and Edom (see my commentary on **Isaiah Gi - Edom's Streams Will Be Turned Into Pitch**).

Babylon's destruction will be so complete that none of the normal activities of human life will take place (also see **Isaiah 24:8; Jeremiah 7:34; Ezekiel 26:13**). **The music of harpists and musicians, flute players and trumpeters, will never be heard in you again. No workman of any trade will ever be found in you again. The sound of a millstone will never be heard in you again (18:22).**

In like manner, **the light of a lamp will never shine in you again. The voice of the bridegroom and bride will never be heard in you again (18:23a)**. Babylon will be so thoroughly destroyed that it will never be inhabited again as prophesied by the TaNaKh prophets (**Isaiah 13:17-22, 14:22-23; Jeremiah 50:13 and 39, 51:37-40**).

Reading about the description of **Babylon's** destruction, we are left speechless. If there was ever a picture of desolation, this is it. There will be no more music, no more culture, no more industry, and the institution of marriage will disintegrate. All the things that we associate with a thriving society will be gone, and the angel says they will **never be found again (Isaiah 13:20-22; Jeremiah 51:37 and 43)**. Never? That's a harsh word to hear. Over and over again the Bible tells us about the mercy of God. Why would the Lord punish any nation so severely? Is ADONAI really so full of wrath and vengeance?

The answer is a resounding, "No!" We know that **the Lord** is loving and merciful, and that He wants no one to be condemned, but desires all to **come to repentance (Second Peter 3:9)**. However, **He** cannot force us to accept **His** love. The choice is up to us. We have freedom to reject **His** grace, but when we do, we get ourselves into trouble. We only have to look around the world to see the fruits of that choice: rampant poverty, crime, divorce, and so many other ills that can bring about a culture of death instead of the abundant life **Yeshua** wants for all of us.

Babylon is certainly guilty of sin, and even more, of seducing the whole world to go along with it. The **large millstone** reminds us of **Jesus'** parable: **If anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone tied around his neck (Mark 9:42)**. But the biggest problem was not merely **Babylon's** sin, it's that **Babylon** denied **God's** remedy for sin, by shedding the blood of the saints, apostles and prophets who announced **His** salvation (**18:20**). The resulting destruction is not really **His** doing; it's what happens whenever man decides that he simply won't listen to the still, small voice of **the Holy Spirit** speaking to his heart.

As unsettling as the **angel's** pronouncement may be, it should remind us of how much we need **God's** mercy and blessings - and our calling to share them with those who are lost. If we look around us, we will surely find some "desolate" places that are thirsting for His refreshing presence. Is our home filled with peace, or is it marked by tension and hostility? Do we bring **the Holy Spirit** to our workplaces, or do we go along with the gossip, office politics and the "bottom line" mentality? We have the chance to bring his living water into our desert situations, and to make them come alive with **His** love!

*Lord, bring all of **Your** children out of the desert and into new life. Transform our hearts, our homes, and our relationships by the power of **Your Holy Spirit**.*⁴⁰¹