

# I've Fallen and I Can't Get Up

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*Revelation 18:1-8*

## **INTRODUCTION**

- A. You remember the commercials quite well:
  - 1. An elderly lady was lying on the floor. and she could not pull herself up.
  - 2. She, with an electronic alert device around her neck, would call for emergency personnel with the words, "I've fallen, and I can't get up."
- B. Those alert devices serve a valuable service — I'm not too sure that an elderly person by himself/herself should be without one. But, those commercials, admittedly, were quite laughable.
- C. As dangerous as falls can be, we laugh just about anytime anyone falls.
  - 1. Who has not struggled to keep a straight face when he saw someone fall in a parking lot? How many episodes of America 's Funniest Home Videos have been dedicated to humorous falls? Who doesn't remember Gerald Ford's falling down the steps coming down from Air Force One?
  - 2. John sees a fall that is not so humorous; rather the fall is quite serious. Tonight, let us examine the fall of Babylon the Great.

## **THE CERTAINTY OF BABYLON'S FALL, vv. 1-2**

- A. John saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority; and the earth was made bright with the angel's splendor, v. 1.
  - 1. This angel, since he has been in heaven, has been in God's presence; he is, therefore, able to speak on God's behalf
  - 2. He has great authority.
    - a. We should not at all be surprised to find this angel's having great authority since he comes from God's presence.
    - b. His authority has been given him from God; his authority may be limited to speaking on God's behalf.
  - 3. The earth was made bright with the angel's splendor.
    - a. Since he has been in God's presence, he has great splendor.
    - b. Moses' face, likewise, shone after he had been in God's presence (Ex. 34:29-35).
- B. The angel called out with a loud voice, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! v. 2.
  - 1. The angels in Revelation are often depicted as having a loud voice; the loud voice allows these angels to be heard clearly by a great multitude.
  - 2. The angel cries, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!"
    - a. The cry shows that Babylon will be cut off and never return.
      - 1) The phrase "Fallen, fallen is so-and-so" originated as a funeral dirge and came to be used for cities which fell.
      - 2) The term "fall" was frequently used in a metaphorical sense in the ancient world to describe a person's violent death, usually a violent death in war.
    - b. The verb "fallen" is in the aorist tense, which describes an event's having taken place in the past.
      - 1) This demonstrates that Babylon — Rome — would fall; there would be no way around it.
      - 2) The historical fall of Rome occurred in August of AD 410 when the city was pillaged by Alaric and his army of Goths.
  - 3. Just as Rome's judgment was certain, the judgment of all mankind is certain.
    - a. "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ" (2 Cor. 5:10).

- b. “It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment” (Heb. 9:27).
- c. Are you ready for that judgment to come?

## **THE CAUSE OF BABYLON’S FALL, vv. 3, 5**

- A. In verse 3, the angel outlines the reasons for Babylon’s fall — “all nations have drunk the wine of her impure passion, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of earth have grown rich with the wealth of her wantonness.”
  - 1. “Impure passion” is often used in the OT to describe apostasy from God; thus, Babylon is pictured as taking the inhabitants of earth away from God. .
  - 2. The kings of the earth have committed fornication with her by carrying out the emperor cult in their various states.
  - 3. The merchants of the earth have grown rich with the wealth of her wantonness — Rome was a rich city, and those merchants who were loyal to Rome saw much financial gain.
- B. In verse 5, a voice from heaven continues to outline the reason for Babylon’s fall — “her sins are heaped high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.”
  - 1. This verse seems to be an allusion to Jer. 51:9, where Babylon’s judgment is pictured as reaching heaven.
  - 2. The metaphor “to the heavens” is a hyperbolic way of expressing the magnitude of something.
    - a. One’s sins reaching to heaven seems to imply that God’s sovereignty is threatened.
    - b. Thus, Babylon’s sins are depicted as being of the utmost severity.
  - 3. God remembered the iniquities of Babylon.
    - a. God is often depicted as remembering the prayers of his people.
    - b. Here, the sins of Babylon reach to heaven just as the prayers of the saints reach heaven; God remembers the sins of Babylon just as he remembers the prayers of his people.
  - 4. God knew the sins of Babylon —he did not forget them. Neither will God forget any of your sins.

## **THE COUNSEL OF BABYLON’S FALL. v. 4**

- A. John heard a voice from heaven saying, “Come out of her, my people. lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues.”
  - 1. This voice from heaven must be divine — either the Father or Christ, for the voice refers to “my people.”
  - 2. This counsel, then, is divine; it comes directly from God.
- B. The people of God needed to come out of Babylon for two reasons: lest you take part in her sins and lest you share in her plagues.
  - 1. If the people of God remained in Babylon, they might take part in her sins.
    - a. There is no doubt that if we surround ourselves with evildoers we ourselves might do evil.
      - 1) Deut. 7: 1-4 — Because the Israelites failed to carry out this command, they were often troubled with unfaithfulness to God.
      - 2) “When Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods” (1 Ki. 11:4).
      - 3) “Do not be deceived: ‘Bad company ruins good morals’” (1 Cor. 15:33).
    - b. We need to be very careful lest we become involved in relationships which lead us further from God.
  - 2. If the people of God remained in Babylon, they might share in her plagues.
    - a. God was bringing destruction upon Babylon. and if the people of God shared in the sins of Babylon, they would share in her plagues.
    - b. God wouldn’t say, “Wait a minute. These are my people. I won’t bring calamity upon them for their sins.”
    - c. We also need to understand that Babylon was going to fall by war, and those in the city would not be safe.

## **THE COEQUALITY OF BABYLON'S FALL, vv. 6-7**

- A. The divine voice makes abundantly clear here that what Babylon receives is just and right and fair.
- B. The divine voice says. "Render to her as she herself has rendered, and repay her double for her deeds; mix a double draught for her in the cup she mixed," v. 6.
  - 1. The idea of paying the evil according to their mistreatment of others was a fairly common concept in the OT — remember: "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth."
  - 2. Paying someone double for his or her deeds indicated that the judgment would be more than complete.
- C. Babylon said in her heart, "A queen I sit, I am no widow, mourning I shall never see," v. 7.
  - 1. Here Babylon, the harlot, calls herself a queen — again, this seems to be juxtaposed to the Bride of Christ, the true queen, at the end of the book.
  - 2. Babylon claimed to be no widow and boasted that she would never see mourning.
    - a. Widows in ancient Israel were greatly disadvantaged, because they lacked the protection and financial support of a husband; they were often in abject poverty.
    - b. Babylon believes that she would never see widowhood or destruction.
- D. Babylon was proud. She thought she would never fall. No doubt, her misguided sense of security, at least in part, caused her fall.
  - 1. Pride can cause our downfall as well.
    - a. "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov. 16:18).
    - b. "Let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12).
  - 2. Will pride be your downfall?

## **THE CONSEQUENCES OF BABYLON'S FALL, v. 8**

- A. Babylon's plagues would come in a single day, pestilence and mourning and famine, and she shall be burned with fire, v. 8.
- B. Great disaster would come upon Babylon.
  - 1. This disaster would come upon Babylon "in a single day."
    - a. The phrase "in a single day" may refer more to the intensity of the plagues than their all beginning in a 24-hour period; these plagues would be overwhelming.
    - b. However, since warfare is obviously in view, it is possible that these plagues would come upon Babylon in a 24-hour period.
  - 2. Each of the plagues described here were associated with warfare in the Ancient Near East.
    - a. Pestilence and famine were the common results of a prolonged siege.
    - b. Mourning was linked with the death of the inhabitants.
    - c. Burning a city with fire was often the final act of destruction by the conquerors of a city.
  - 3. The idea is very obvious — those who are unfaithful to God, as was this harlot, face severe consequences, punishment from God.

## **CONCLUSION**

- A. There would be many who might say, "Wait a minute! Rome is so powerful that she will never fall."
  - 1. John answers that objection at the conclusion of this passage — "For mighty is the Lord God who judges her" (v. 8).
  - 2. Rome, as powerful as she was, was not powerful enough to stave off punishment from God.
- B. There are many who might say, "Look, I don't need to worry about judgment. I've got plenty of time to make a decision later."
  - 1. Rome, and those around her, thought she was impenetrable; nothing bad could happen to her.
  - 2. However, great tragedy befell Rome, and she fell.
  - 3. As secure as people might think they are, they shall face the judgment of God, "for mighty is the Lord God who judges" them, Are you ready for that judgment?