

Dr. Dave Mathewson, Revelation, Lecture 23, Revelation 17:7-18:8 Interpreting the Beast and the Fall of Babylon

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This is Dr. Dave Mathewson in his course on the book of Revelation. This is session 23, Revelation 17:7-18:8, Interpreting the Beast and the Fall of Babylon.

Before we move on, I want to return to one Old Testament text.

It was Isaiah chapter 21 and verse 1 that portrayed Babylon as being connected to a desert. So that may provide part of the background for the setting for John's vision in here in chapter 17. And then likewise, when Babylon is called the mother of all prostitutes, the imagery may also convey that she produces these things in others, in other nations, and those that she seduces, as well as the abominations of the earth.

Again, recalling her responsibility for the idolatrous practices of the nations that she now reproduces in them. Now, in verse 7, John responds with complete astonishment. There may be a couple of notions involved in his response.

One of them may be fear because of what he sees. Given the angel's response when he says, why are you astonished? I will explain this mystery. It's probably also one of perplexity and wondering what in the world it was he saw and how to understand this.

It may also be that John himself found the vision attractive and was in a sense startled by the beauty and attraction of what he saw. Now, the angel is going to respond to his astonishment, amazement, and perhaps attraction by starting with verse 8, actually starting here with verse 7. He's going to describe exactly what it was John saw, not taking every single detail of the vision in the first six verses but taking most of the features of the vision and now beginning to unpack them. The first intriguing thing to note about the vision is that John begins by describing the beast in very intriguing language four times, or I'm sorry, three times in this section.

Here, in this verse twice and then later on in verse 11, John will use the language of the beast was, is not, and is coming. This is probably meant as a direct contrast to and a parody of the way that God is described in chapter 1 in verse 8, chapter 4 in verse 8, and chapter 11 in verses 10 and 14, where it's only twofold. There, it was only twofold.

You don't have is coming in chapters 11 and 14 because Christ, God, has already come. But in 1:8 and 4:8 we find the one who was, who is, and who is coming. And

now it's as if, in contrast to that, as a direct parody, the beast is described as the one who was, who is not, and who is coming.

The fact that he is not probably referring back to Revelation 13, where one of his heads had a death blow or because of the death and the resurrection of Christ that spelled out his defeat and cast him out of heaven. So, the fact that he was and does not suggest his death blow and his judgment and defeat because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. But we saw in chapter 13 that the entire world was amazed because he apparently was able to overcome that and survive that.

The other feature, though, is that he is coming, which probably contrasts with all the references throughout Revelation to Christ's coming and to God's coming in the future. Now Satan is coming, but ironically, he is coming in order to go into; he comes up out of the abyss, but in order to go into destruction. So, unlike God and the Lamb's coming, which results in salvation, the establishment of God's coming of the beast results in his destruction, which we'll see later on in chapter 19.

So, this is meant to clearly contrast the beast's existence to that of God and the Lamb. It may also be this idea of the Lamb or of the beast coming out of the abyss and going to destruction; this may also reflect a motif that you find in apocalyptic literature, especially the Enoch literature, the first and second Enoch of demonic beings who are locked in prison for a time only to be let out to go into their judgment. And that would certainly fit here, that the purpose of the beast coming out of the abyss is that he's locked in the abyss, and now he comes out in order to go to his destruction and in order to go into his judgment.

So I would take it then when in the next two mentions of this motif or this title, the one who was and is not and is coming, the is coming would be understood as he is coming in order to go into destruction. And it's because of his nature, because he was and is not, but now apparently is coming, that it's for this reason that the nations are deceived. Some have suggested this, he is not and is coming.

Some have suggested this reflects the myth of Nero, that there was all kinds of uncertainty surrounding his death. Some even thought that he actually did not really die and that he was going to come back and reclaim his throne. And some suggest that lies behind this title.

That's possible; that could provide the backdrop. But clearly John's primary impetus is to draw a contrast with the divine name, the one who was, who was, who is, and who is coming. Now, Satan or the beast's existence is seen in similar terms.

Again, he is a poor parody of, and when he instead of is, he is not showing his defeat. And when he comes, it will be for the purpose of going into destruction. So that's how John describes, describes the beast or the angel describes to John, the beast

that he saw as a parody of, of the existence of God and the Lamb that, but for Satan, for the beast, one that will result in his punishment and destruction, which will get narrated in chapter 19.

Now, perhaps the trickiest part of this is what the angel does with the seven heads of the beast. The beast described as having seven heads and 10 horns. The angel is now going to interpret those seven heads and the 10 horns for us.

And this is where it gets a little bit tricky. The seven horns and the seven heads are interpreted in two ways. And this is, this would not be unusual in apocalyptic that an image could have more than one meaning.

So we don't need to see inconsistency here or more than one source or something like that. It's possible that an image in an apocalyptic image could carry more than one connotation. So the angel says the seven heads are the seven hills identifying the beast here with Rome at the same, and the woman riding, sitting on the, on the beast, identifying the woman that is as Rome, but the seven heads are also seven Kings or seven rulers.

And the angel says out of these seven, five of them have already ruled and fallen. That is, the rule is finished. One is currently ruling.

He says five have fallen. One is, and one is to come. So, five have already fallen.

One currently is, and there is one yet to come. Now, if we take these seven heads as seven Kings and the seven Kings being seven emperors, the seven Kings of Rome that seven emperors, some have said these are seven kingdoms. But I think we should probably take these as seven rulers or seven Kings, that is, emperors over the Roman empire.

The question then is, how do we identify these? Some have used this text to try to date Rome. That is if we can identify who the one who is, when John says five had fallen, one is, and if we can identify who that one is, that would give us a clue as to when the book of Revelation was written, perhaps. The problem, though, is when you begin to look at the list of emperors, let us assume, for example, that we begin, let us assume, for example, that we hold to the view that Revelation probably was written under Domitian.

The difficulty is if you start with Julius Caesar, the first emperor, and work through the list, including Domitian, you have twelve emperors. And so, if you go through seven, then you fall short of Domitian. And in fact, to arrive at any date, you sort of have to do gymnastics with or explain your way around the list of twelve.

There is more after Domitian, but Domitian is, there have been a couple of suggestions as to even a later date. But since Domitian is the most common date, I am stopping there. But you have twelve emperors to work through.

And the question is, out of these seven, which of those twelve might this refer to? And that might determine when we date it. Some have suggested we do not start with Julius Caesar, but we, for different reasons, start a little bit later. We have already noted that in 68 and 69 AD, there were three emperors that ruled in quick succession.

And they were deposed from the throne. And some have suggested we retain those in the list. Some suggest we should skip that because of the short brief time that John would not have thought of counting them as part of the seven.

So, there have been all kinds of suggestions as to where we start counting the emperors and who we include in this list of seven. I think it is better to take this list as symbolic. That is, we have already noted how often the number seven is used for completeness and perfection.

So I think John uses seven not to refer; let us assume it was written during the time of Domitian. I do not think John is using seven to refer to any seven specific literal emperors, but seven suggesting the complete number and the complete rule of Rome's emperors, rather than seven literal specific emperors out of those that he has in mind. So, looking at all of Rome's emperors, perhaps even beyond, well, obviously beyond because there is one still to come. If Domitian is, and I do not want to place too much weight on this, but if Domitian is the one who is, then the one who is yet to come, again, that is the seventh.

John is looking at all of the emperors who would rule Rome, symbolizing their complete rule by the number seven. Now, what does he mean when he says five have fallen, one is, and one is to come? First of all, I think this is another ironic repetition of the formula applied to God, the one who was, who is, and who is to come. Now five have fallen, one is, and one is coming.

So he's portrayed not only the beast, but he's portrayed the entire existence and life of the Roman Empire and its emperors once more as a parody of, and an imitation of the existence of God, the one who was, who is, and who is coming. So, this language is partially meant to reflect that divine title. And that not only the beast, but Roman empires, the life of Rome, the span of Roman empires, repeats and imitates and is a parody of the existence of Rome, God's existence reflected in the one who was, who is, and who is coming.

Furthermore, I think this language of five have fallen, one is, and one is to come, is meant simply to demonstrate that evil is running its course and that this will not last.

That the bulk of Rome's rule is over, and its reign is only going to be for a short time before God brings it to an end before God comes and judges the Roman Empire. So when he says five have fallen, one is, one is to come, it's simply to show it won't last forever.

The Roman Empire will not last forever, but the last, and in fact, the last two, the one who is and the one who is to come, will fall just like the first five. So we're not meant to add up and figure out seven literal rulers by saying five have already fallen. The bulk of Rome's evil rule has already taken place, and it has yet to last for a short time, but they, too, the other rulers, will fall just like the first five.

Now, what is intriguing is, note how the beast is described in relationship to all this. And you can kind of see the apocalyptic symbolism going on. The rulers are actually the beast's head.

But now note how the beast is described in verse 11. The beast who once was, and now is not, and he is an eighth king. He belongs to the seven and he is going to his destruction.

So it's interesting that the beast is associated with the seven heads, which are seven emperors or rulers, yet the beast seems to represent an eighth. What I think this is suggesting most likely is the future coming of the beast at the very end of history. The same beast that inspires the seven, in other words, the whole span of the Roman empire that will run its course, the beast functions then as an eighth that will yet come at the end of history.

But when he does, he will go to his destruction. So the point of all this then is just simply to demonstrate the nature of the beast existence as much as it is able to wield its authority through its emperors. And even though it will come at the end of history as an eighth, the Roman rule simply won't last.

It's headed for destruction, and it's headed for judgment. So again, what do the readers have to fear? And now they can see Rome in a new light. The next feature then is the 10 horns, which the angel interprets as 10 kingdoms.

So the seven heads represent the entire span of Roman rule and the emperors with the beast. After that, the beast comes as an eighth at the end of history, but he will go into destruction. So, the human kingdoms and human rule will not last.

It's temporary. It will end in destruction. Now the 10 horns, the angel identifies as 10 kingdoms.

Probably like the number seven, we should not take these as literal, 10 literal kingdoms that we can identify on a map, but 10 being symbolic of completeness, 10

being symbolic of a full or complete number now is meant to symbolize the nations of the world that will rule along with the beast or along with Rome. And again, I don't think we're meant to try to identify 10 specific ones as much as we are to see the fullness and completeness of all the nations who will be in collusion with the beast. These are probably to be identified with the kings of the earth back in chapters 16 and 14, who say that Satan and the beast and false prophet are, through three frogs, allowed to deceive into gathering for an end-time battle.

And in fact, that's exactly what happens here. The beast and the nations of the earth come together for one purpose. And that is as allies in an all out war against the Lamb.

But the result is what has already been depicted and predicted in the first several verses of this interpretation. And that is, the beast is going to destruction. And so will the nations that collude with the beast and with the Roman empire.

They all will collude and become allies in making war with the Lamb, but the Lamb will defeat them. So there's really no battle that takes place here at all. So in a sense, and this is another very brief reference to an end time battle.

Back in chapter 16 and verse 14, we were introduced to the battle of Armageddon, which we saw there, the battle of Armageddon, a symbol of end-time battle. The battle is not described here briefly. I think if we are to identify this with chapter 16, the battle in 16, here are the wars described briefly, but it's really not a war at all.

The Lamb simply destroys and defeats his enemies. Note the language of one hour. This happens in one hour.

One hour probably being a reference to or symbolic of simply a short period of time. A couple of other interesting features of this interpretation that leads us to the end of chapter 17. First, note that the angel interprets the waters back from verse one and two, the waters on which the prostitute Babylon sits.

The waters are symbolic of peoples and nations and multitudes and languages. The fact that she sits in the waters probably indicates the beast or the woman's Babylon, Rome's authority over all the nations. And what is next though, is rather astonishing, is the beast and the 10 nations.

We've already seen the beast and the woman being separated, the woman riding the beast, which may suggest the beast is symbolic of evil and chaos and demonically inspired the beast and the woman being separate. Now, the beast and the 10 nations seem to turn on the prostitute Babylon, the great city, and destroy her. What I think this is simply suggesting is that, ironically, those who depended on her and even

colluded with her for their economic well-being and practices now turn on her and destroy her.

In my opinion, simply at one level indicating the self-destructive nature of the empire, the self-destructive nature of sin, that any empire that sets itself up over God, that arrogates divine authority, that claims the exclusive worship and sovereignty that belongs only to God, that maintains itself through violence, that seduces others to participate in its self-seeking wealth, the result is self-destruction. And so the beast that gave it the power and underlies its authority and power, and now the 10 nations that allied with it, now all turn in on it to destroy it, suggesting, as I've said, perhaps the self-destructive nature of evil. So the point of this section so far has been to demonstrate the true nature of, in true apocalyptic fashion, to unveil and demonstrate the true nature of Babylon Rome.

It is a prostitute that seduces other nations to be involved in its idolatrous economic practices. It seduces other nations to participate in its wealth, excessive luxury, and lust for more. It also is guilty of violence in killing those who oppose it, especially the people of God who have maintained their faithful witness.

It is guilty of arrogating divine power and divine authority. And for all these reasons, its end is destruction. No matter how great the beast appears, and no matter how significant a role its seven emperors play, at the end of the day, it will bring about its destruction.

And so this demonstrates why Babylon Rome is ripe for judgment and destruction. It demonstrates why chapter 18, why then the destruction. Chapter 17 has spelled that out.

But it also then shows the churches exactly what or who it is they are facing by unveiling the true nature of Rome and what is at stake in resisting it or in participating. If they choose to participate, they are guilty, along with the other nations, of committing adultery with her. Churches such as Laodicea that are complacent and wealthy, or other churches that have compromised or are allowing those who have compromised with the idolatrous, godless Roman economic system.

Now, this chapter will remind them exactly what is at stake in colluding with Rome. Why is it that they should be so intent on maintaining their faithful witness and refusing to conform and compromise? Now chapter 17 has demonstrated, again, Rome in its true colors. It is a seductive prostitute that, through its alluring appearance and through its attraction, covers up its hideous sinful nature, covers up its fact that it is headed for judgment, and causes nations to commit adultery with it.

And this is a call for the church then to separate from that. Chapter 18 will begin in verse 4, come out of her. Why? Because she is this prostitute, who is headed for destruction.

So come out of her. Do not be involved in her sinful practices so that you will not participate in her judgment. Now, that brings us to chapter 18.

Chapter 18 then reveals in more detail the destruction of the prostitute Babylon. In fact, this is what we would expect back in chapter 17:1: did not the angel tell John that he was going to show him the judgment of the prostitute Babylon?

In fact, that is what John narrates here, but he has already introduced that at the very end of chapter 17. We have said chapter 17 shows the reason for Babylon's fall, but chapter 17 already ended with a brief hint of her destruction, that the nations and the beast would turn against her, and turn on her and destroy her. So it was briefly referred to in chapter 17 verse 16 at the end, but now chapter 18 gives us more details concerning the destruction of Babylon.

Chapter 18 ends up being sort of a pastiche of Old Testament text. Old Testament texts taken usually from judgment oracles out of Jeremiah 50, and 51 we have seen, out of Isaiah in relationship to Tyre and other nations, and a couple of other Old Testament texts all now come together to portray Babylon, Babylon Rome as sort of the embodiment of all these other nations who suffered judgment. The other thing to mention about chapter 18 before we read it is that chapter 18 does not seem to follow in chronological order, or I should say the events in chapter 18, and the sections in chapter 18 do not seem to follow in chronological order.

We will look at that in more detail in a moment. But the point of this section is that the saints will one day rejoice over the fall of Babylon because it demonstrates God's justice in avenging their blood and in vindicating them. And so, for that reason, they should separate it from it to avoid judgment.

So, the saints are called upon to separate from Babylon at Rome to avoid its judgment. And if they do, they will one day rejoice over Babylon's fall because the fall of Babylon demonstrates God's justice. It demonstrates that God is just in judging them, but also in vindicating and avenging his people.

So chapter 18 continues the vision of chapter 7, but now you'll note as we read this, there's very little by way of what John saw, and what John sees are several groups, but the main content of chapter 18 is auditory in the form of laments and the form of speech, almost all of them taken right out of the Old Testament. So, in chapter 18, after this, after John saw chapter 17, now he sees this. After this, I saw another angel coming down from heaven.

He has great authority, and the earth is illuminated by his splendor. With a mighty voice, he shouted, fallen, fallen is Babylon the Great. She has become a home for demons and a haunt for every evil spirit, a haunt for every unclean and detestable bird, for all the nations have drunk the maddening wine of her adulteries.

The kings of the earth committed adultery with her, and the merchants of the earth grew rich from her excessive luxuries. Then I heard another voice from heaven say, come out of her, my people so that you will not share in her sins and so that you will not receive any of her plagues. For her sins are piled up to the heavens and God has remembered her crimes.

Give back to her as she has given. Pay her back double for what she has done. Mix her a double portion from her own cup.

Give her as much torture and grief as the glory and luxury she gave herself. In her heart, she boasts, and here's what she boasts: I am queen, I am not a widow, and I will never mourn. Therefore, one day, her plagues will overtake her.

Death, mourning, and famine, she will be consumed by fire, for mighty is the Lord God who judges her. When the kings of the earth who had committed adultery with her and shared her luxury see the smoke of her burning, they will weep and mourn over her. Terrified of her torment, they will stand far off and cry, whoa, whoa, oh great city, oh Babylon city of power, in one hour your doom has come.

The merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her because no one buys their cargo anymore. Cargoes of gold, silver, and precious stones and pearls, which is what the prostitute was dressed with in chapter 17. Fine linen, purple and silk, and scarlet cloth, the dress of the prostitute too.

Every sort of citron wood and articles of every kind made of ivory, costly wood, bronze, iron, and marble. Cargoes of cinnamon and spice, of incense, myrrh, and frankincense, of wine and olive oil, of fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and carriages, and bodies and souls of men. They will say the fruit that you long for is gone from you.

All your riches and splendor have vanished, never to be recovered. The merchants who sold these things and gained their wealth from her will stand far off. Terrified of her torment, they will weep and mourn and cry out, whoa, whoa, oh great city, dressed in fine linen, purple and scarlet, glittering with gold and precious stones and pearls.

There they are again. In one hour such great wealth has been brought to ruin. And then every sea captain and all who travel by ship, the sailors and all who earn their living from the sea will stand far off.

And when they see the smoke of her burning, they will exclaim, was there ever a city like this great city? They will throw dust in their heads, and they, with weeping and mourning, will cry out, whoa, whoa, oh great city, where all who had ships on the sea became rich through her wealth. In one hour, she has been brought to ruin. Rejoice over her, oh heaven.

Rejoice, saints and apostles and prophets. God has judged her for the way she has treated you. Then a mighty angel picked up a boulder the size of a large millstone and hurled it into the sea and said, with such violence, the great city of Babylon will be thrown down, never to be found again.

And the music of harpists and musicians, flute players and trumpeters will never be heard in her again. No workmen of any trade will ever be found in you again. The sound of a millstone will never be heard in you again.

The light of a lamp will never shine on you again. The voice of a bridegroom and bride will never be heard in you again. Your merchants were the world's great men.

By your magic spell, all the nations were led astray. In her was found the blood of the prophets and of the saints and all who have been killed by the earth." Starting with verse 4 then, the rest of the chapter becomes a series of speeches and laments that now stem from the voice in verse 4. What is important to understand is that this section, as we've already mentioned, is not primarily a vision. There are visionary elements that begin after this, and I see another angel.

So John does see things, but what he sees is an angel, and what he sees are different groups and persons who utter the auditions or who are responsible for the laments and the speeches. But verse 4 then, it begins the voice from heaven that now will sort of characterize the rest of the chapter. And as I've already mentioned, I want to demonstrate briefly, it appears to me that the audition, all these auditions are not necessarily in chronological order.

For example, in verses 1 through 3, these verses seem to assume that Babylon has already fallen. And to back up, the first thing I want to say, although the angel promises to show John the destruction of Babylon, there's really no narrative of the destruction at all. Chapter 18 really does not depict in any detail the destruction.

It demonstrates the results of the destruction and those who respond to it. So, it more or less assumes the destruction. But verses 1 through 3, fallen, fallen is Babylon the great.

She has become a home for demons. Verses 1 through 3 seem to assume that Babylon has already or just fallen. But then, in verse 4, when John hears another

voice, come out of her my people so that you will not share in her sins and so that you will not receive any of her plagues.

This seems to assume Babylon has not yet fallen. These events in 4 through 8 seem to have taken place before the fall of Babylon. And then verses 9 through 20 seem to refer to events following and in response to the fall of Babylon in the form of persons who mourn because of her fall.

So chapter 18 is not intended to present a chronological order, but again are meant more to interpret the nature of fall and through the series of speeches and laments. It's interesting as I've already mentioned that chapter 18 assumes the fall of Babylon, yet it does not refer to it explicitly. It never actually narrates it.

Chapter 18 then is constructed of Old Testament oracles of judgment against pagan cities such as Jeremiah 50 and 51 and Babylon, as oracles against Nineveh or Tyre, all now combined into this Babylon Rome, this great city that is now going to be destroyed. And the rest of the chapter, and we'll move through it quickly, but the rest of the chapter can be divided. And we'll simply divide the rest of the chapter according to the various voices.

So the first one is in chapter 18, 1 through 3, which verses 1 through 3 is in the form of an Old Testament prophetic taunt song. And for example, Isaiah chapter 21 and verse 9. And Isaiah chapter 21 and verse 9, which is a song against Babylon. Look, here comes a man in a chariot with a team of horses and he gives back the answer, Babylon has fallen, has fallen, or revelations fallen, fallen is Babylon.

All the images of its gods lie shattered on the ground. So, given the background of Isaiah 21:9, idolatrous practices may still be in mind here. But as a result of Babylon's fall, it becomes a place for demons and all kinds of unclean animals.

Again, demonstrating the complete destruction and the complete overturning of the former glory of Babylon. In fact, another Old Testament text that plays a role in describing the downfall of the great city now finally being laid waste is another text out of Isaiah and chapter 34 and verses 11 through 14. Isaiah 34 in a series of judgments oracles against the nations in Isaiah 34:11-14.

The desert owl, the screech owl will possess it. The great owl and the raven will nest there. God will stretch out over Edom, the measuring line of chaos and plum line of desolation.

Her nobles will have nothing to be called a kingdom. All her princes will vanish away. Thorns will overrun her citadels.

Nettles and brambles are strongholds. She will become a haunt for jackals, a home for owls. Desert creatures will meet with hyenas.

Wild goats will bleat with each other. There the night creatures will also repose and find for themselves places of rests. That's the language in the text, I think, that John draws upon to describe the destruction of Babylon Rome.

And the imagery is of the city being laid completely waste. It's been laid waste. It now is reduced to chaos.

It's now reduced to destruction, indicated by the fact that she's now a desert wasteland inhabited by all kinds of unclean animals, let alone demonic beings. And often, demonic beings were associated with desert places. So the great city has now been laid waste and the reason is articulated in verse 3, which goes back to the description of the prostitute as, or Rome as a prostitute.

And that is verse 3, all the nations have been drunk with her wine. All the nations have committed adultery with her by being seduced and entrapped into her idolatrous economic practices. That is, they have bought into Rome's economic system and now they have become wealthy on her excessive luxury.

So what you'll notice too with these speeches is not only are these speeches laments or woes that come out of the Old Testament in portraying the downfall and judgment of a great city or people, but you also find, alluding back to chapter 17, you also find the author re-articulating the reasons for Babylon's fall. Here, we find that the reason for Rome's fall is she caused other nations. Again, John has drawn on the language of prostitute and adultery from Nahum chapter 3 and even Isaiah 23, applying the language of prostitution and adultery to foreign countries, and foreign nations.

So Rome is guilty of causing other nations, seducing other nations to commit adultery with her. They are now complicit in her crimes. And that is the reason why Babylon Rome is now guilty of punishment.

They've involved other nations in her commercial idolatrous practices. But also on its own, Rome is portrayed as having a lust for consuming wealth, having excessive luxury and wealth. We've already seen back in chapter 6 that Rome was guilty of, or part of the judgment on Rome in the form of, I think, seal 3, for example, 3 or 4, seal 3, I believe, is Rome was guilty of exploiting even its own provinces simply for its own benefit and for its own lust for wealth and for its own excessive luxury and did so at the expense and even exploiting the other provinces and other nations as well.

I've already mentioned that much of the model for Revelation chapter 18 is Jeremiah chapter 50, but also texts such as Ezekiel and Ezekiel 27, for example, that focus on Tyre. And I've already mentioned the reason for that is probably because Ezekiel chapter 27, which focuses on Tyre is primarily an economic critique of Tyre Jeremiah

51 does not seem to contain that. Ezekiel 27 clearly condemns Tyre and focuses on Tyre for its economic exploitation, for its excessive luxury.

So it provides a fitting model for John's critique of Babylon, Rome here in chapter 18. So Babylon is condemned then for its ostentatious display of wealth, its lust and thirst for excessive luxury and excessive consumption, and then by seducing the nations to participate in that. And that is why, that is what will bring God's wrath down in Babylon in the first three verses.

Verses 4 through 8 then are a call for God's people to come out of Babylon in order to avoid that judgment. And notice it's actually twofold. Number one, they're to come out of her so that they will not share in her sins, but second, so that they will not share in her plagues or her judgment.

Now this call, if John is speaking to people in Asia Minor or even people living in Rome, it's hard to imagine that the readers were meant to carry this out literally. In fact, if I'm living in Asia Minor, how do you physically come out of Rome? Its empire spread everywhere. So, we probably were to understand this coming out as not physical, but as we've seen, especially back in chapters 2 and 3, coming out would mean overcoming by refusing to compromise.

By refusing to participate in her idolatrous economic practices, this is how they would come out of her. So it's not a physical leaving the city of Rome, and many people were not in Rome, they were in the provinces. It was almost impossible to come out of her physically.

So this is more of a call, another way of saying refuse to compromise, refuse to conform, and be involved in her idolatrous economic practices. The Old Testament background for this is a number of texts that call for God's people to leave or to come out of Babylon. One of those is found in the text that plays a dominant role, Jeremiah 50 and verse 8, where we read, flee from Babylon, leave the land of the Babylonians.

But another interesting text, Isaiah chapter 48 and verse 20, I think is the text I'm looking for. Isaiah 48 and verse 20, leave Babylon and flee from the Babylonians, are similar to the language in Jeremiah chapter 50. But then also, one other intriguing text in Isaiah, and that is chapter 52 and verse 11, where he says, depart, depart, go out from there, touch no unclean thing.

If this text also lies, Isaiah chapter 52 and verse 11, depart, go out, also lies behind John's call to leave Babylon, and we've seen elsewhere that John sometimes will combine a number of Old Testament texts, alluding to several texts at once. Isaiah chapter 52, if you read the rest of the chapter, is in the context of a new exodus. So

John then is calling on his readers in a new exodus to leave Babylon as the Israelites first left Egypt, to touch no unclean thing.

Now they are to leave Babylon, Rome, in a new exodus, which will eventually lead them to their promised land, which is Revelation 21 and 22, and the new creation. The other important feature about this call to leave Babylon is the reason, and that is the author says, the reason is their sins have piled up to the heavens, and now God has remembered her crimes. Note that theme of remembering that we saw back in chapter 16 as well, the seventh seal or seventh bowl, God remembered Babylon for the purpose of bringing about judgment.

The idea is not God had forgotten and all of a sudden it comes to his mind that he has something he needs to do, but the language of remembering again in the context of God is now faithful to keep his promises to bring about judgment on Babylon, Rome. But what is intriguing here is two things. Number one, note over and over this language that we've already seen elsewhere in Revelation that comes out of the Old Testament of the judgment fitting the crime.

Just as a nation did, God would repay them in turn. So you have this legal language of the judgment now fits the crime. And so, in verse six, give back to her as she has given.

So in the same way that Babylon, Rome, has seduced other nations and involved them in her adultery, in the same way, that she has put to death the saints and through violence shed the blood of God's people, now she is to be given a judgment that fits the crime. But the second thing to note is the author seems to at first contradict that when he says, pay her back double for what she has done. Mix her a double portion.

And so some have wondered how we reconcile the fact that the author says to give her back according to what she has done. But now he says, no, let's ratchet it up a little bit and give her double for what she has done. For example, Grant Osborne, in his commentary, has interpreted this to say that actually, what is going on here is this reflects Old Testament texts such as Exodus 22, where if you committed a crime, a person was expected to pay double at times in restitution for the crime they committed.

Others have suggested, and the majority view is that this is not so much referring to double punishment, literally double punishment, as much as the complete or full punishment that God will give to Babylon and Rome for their crimes. Another one that I'm attracted to is that, that I think makes good sense here, is that the word double is better translated equivalent. That is the punishment produces a duplicate or it balances out.

That is almost as if on a scale, the crime is on one side, and then the duplicate punishment balances it out. So, it's just another way of saying the same thing. The crime or the punishment fits the crime.

It's a duplicate of the crime. It balances it out. So, I don't know that we should necessarily see the idea of a double portion here.

That is that, God says, I'm going to punish Babylon according to his crime. No, I think I'm going to double it instead; maybe we should see it more in terms of equivalent or duplicate. So that this is just another way of saying the punishment will match the crime.

And this, that certainly fits the punishment will fit the crime motif found within this section. Verses seven and eight then once more, and you'll find this in all in most of these speeches is verses seven and eight further describe the reason for the punishment. Why is it that God is going to give a punishment fitting the crime? Because verses seven and eight, especially the end of verse seven, in her heart, she boasts, I sit as queen.

I am not a widow. In other words, the author is now reminding us of the crime for which she will be punished. And that is, she glorifies herself rather than God.

This, this, uh, I sit as queen in her heart. She boasts, I sit as queen is probably meant to contrast with, uh, elsewhere calls to fear God and give him glory in direct contradiction and opposition to that. Now, Rome has boasted by setting herself up as God by claiming the glory and authority that belongs only to God by saying, I sit as queen, I am on my throne, uh, now sitting as the queen over all things.

But furthermore, uh, uh, furthermore as the rest of the text will make clear, uh, that she is also judged because she lives in excessive luxury and, uh, especially at the end, at the expense of the rest of the empire. So, notice we're building a picture here. Uh, uh, Rome lives in excessive luxury.

It selfishly accumulates wealth for itself. And at the same time, it is guilty of persecuting the saints. It is guilty of violently putting them to death.

It is also, it is also guilty of causing the other nations to commit adultery with it, with its idolatrous economic practices. Furthermore, now it is portrayed as exalting itself, glorifying itself, setting itself up over God, and irrigating divine power and authority. And for all those reasons, now, uh, God is going to bring about judgment upon Babylon.

Now what we find in, in the rest of the section in verses 9 through 19 is the various people of the earth that benefited from Rome's, uh, uh, for, for, from Rome's

prosperity and from its economic practices, from its excessive wealth and luxury. Now we find those people, uh, we find groups of those people now singing songs of lament, mourning the destruction and mourning the judgment and downfall of Rome. And the reason is obvious because the demise of Rome also means their demise.

The demise of Rome means that they are now cut off from that by which they also grew wealthy. And they also keep accumulated excess of luxury. In other words, verses 9 through 19 are going to be the speech of those that the prostitute Rome caused to commit adultery with her by getting them to again, be involved in their idolatry in its idolatrous economic practices.

Those who have grown wealthy off of the seductive wealth of the prostitute Rome. Now those groups stand around and in the form of a funeral dirge actually in the form of sort of a funeral dirge and based on Ezekiel 27, which is a lament over Tyre. Now we find these, uh, we, we find these groups who have benefited from Rome mourning over its fall because, as I've said, this was the source of their luxury and their excessive wealth.

And now that that has been cut off, we find an interesting picture then of them mourning, not over their own sin, but they mourn over the fall of Babylon, because these are the ones that have been seduced into being involved in Babylon's excessive luxury and, uh, seduced into committing adultery with her. Note Ezekiel 27, uh, Ezekiel 27. And just to read a handful of, uh, a handful of the passages, I'll start with, uh, I'll start with, uh, verse 25.

The ships of Tarsha serve as carriers for your waves, for your wares. You are filled with heavy cargo in the heart of the sea. Your oarsmen take you out to the high seas, but the east wind will break you to pieces in the heart of the seas.

Your wealth, merchandise, and wares, your mariners, seamen, and shipwrights, your merchants, and all your soldiers and everyone else on board will sink into the heart of the sea on the day of your shipwreck. The shorelands will quake when your seamen cry out. All who handle the oars, who abandon their ships, the mariners, and all the seamen will stand on the shore.

They will raise their voice and cry bitterly over you over the fall of Tyre. They will sprinkle dust on their heads. We'll see one of the groups does that and roll in ashes.

They will shave their heads because of you, and they will put on sackcloth. They will weep over you with anguish of soul and with bitter mourning. As they wail and mourn over you, they will take up a lament concerning you.

Who was ever silenced like Tyre, surrounded by the sea? When your merchandise went out on the seas, you satisfied many nations. With your great wealth and your wares, you enriched the kings of the earth. Now you are shattered by the sea.

In the depths of the water, your wares and all your company have gone down to the sea. All who live in the coastlands are appalled at you. Their kings shudder with horror, and their faces are distorted with fear.

The merchants among the nations hiss at you and you have come to the horrible end and will be no more." Now we'll see that John will model the responses of those who have benefited from Rome. He will model their responses on those who responded with mourning and lament to the downfall of Tyre because likewise with Tyre, the nations grew rich and wealthy off of Tyre's wealth and their excessive luxury. Now, in the same way, John will describe the effects of Babylon and Rome's fall by depicting those who mourn because now they also have benefited from the wealth of Rome, and now that Rome is destroyed and its wealth is no more, their demise is now certain as well.

And so in the next section, we'll look more specifically at the three groups and their lament and mourning over the downfall and destruction of Rome.

This is Dr. Dave Mathewson in his course on the book of Revelation. This is session 23, Revelation 17:7-18:8, Interpreting the Beast and the Fall of Babylon.