

Dr. Dave Mathewson, Revelation, Lecture 24, Revelation 18:9-19:10, The Lament and Joy over Babylon's Fall

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This is Dr. Dave Mathewson in his course on the book of Revelation. This is session 24, Revelation chapter 18:9-19:10, The Lament and Joy over Babylon's Fall.

In verses 9 through 19 of chapter 18, we said that we find the lament and mourning much like in the mourning and laments given in response to the fall of Tyre back in Ezekiel chapter 27.

Now we find the mourning and lament of those who cooperated with Rome and those who shared in and participated in its wealth and its economic system and now mourning because of the fall, meaning, as we've mentioned, their demise and meaning that their source of wealth has been cut off. So they don't mourn because of their sin but because of the downfall of Rome and how that affects them. What we find is that the laments and mourning will be attributed to three different groups in chapter 18, verses 9 through 19.

The first group will be the lament of the kings of the earth in verses 9 and 10. The second group will be the lament of the merchants in verses 11 through 17. And then finally, the group that kind of dominated the Tyre oracle in Ezekiel 27 is the group of ship persons or those who are ship owners and involved in commerce through trade through the shipping industry. You will find their lament in verses 17 through 19 as the final group.

And you'll note, too, that it sort of reaches a climax in the final group in exactly how they respond. But starting in verses 9 and 10, the lament of the kings of the earth and two reasons why they lament in this section is number one, they have committed adultery with Babylon Rome, and we've already seen that this is not physical adultery, though a couple commentaries take it that way. This is probably not physical adultery, though it doesn't mean they didn't, but instead were to understand this in terms of participating in her wealth and in her idolatry.

We've seen that Rome, as a prostitute, caused other nations to commit adultery with her by involving them in her economic practices, where they became excessively wealthy and enjoyed their consumption for wealth, and they enjoyed excessive wealth because of their association with Rome. This is the second reason why they have lived in luxury. They became rich off of Rome's wealth, and now they mourn because that supply has been cut off, so to speak, because of God's judgment in Rome.

The fact that they stand far off probably suggests their desire to avoid the judgment that is now falling upon Rome. Note, too, that they respond in the form of woes, which we already saw with the trumpet judgments at the very end of chapter 8. In introducing the last three trumpet judgments, they were called woes. The woes are uttered because of judgment that is to come upon, or that is coming upon a nation.

So, the woe is a term of mourning because of judgment that has now come upon the city of Babylon, Rome. So that is the kings of the earth. The kings of the earth are those who have become excessively wealthy off of the wealth of Rome.

They are the ones who are picking up language from chapter 7. They have committed adultery with the prostitute, and now they mourn in the face of her judgment. In verses 11 through 17, we are introduced to the second group, the lament of the merchants. And probably here the author is dependent especially on Ezekiel chapter 27, which in verse 27 but also 30 through 32, we said Ezekiel 27 is the lament over especially focusing on those who carried out commerce in the shipping industry, now mourning because of the downfall and the judgment upon the city of Tyre.

But I want you to notice that in chapter 27 and verse 27, he describes your wealth, merchandise and wares, your mariners, seamen and shipwrights, your merchants and all your soldiers and everyone else on board. And then also 30 through 33, they will raise their voice and bitterly cry out. They will shave their heads because of you.

They will put on sackcloth, and they will weep over you in anguish and with bitter mourning as they wail and mourn over you. They will take up a lament concerning you. Who has ever silenced like Tyre, surrounded by the sea? When your merchandise went out on your seas, you satisfied many nations with your great wealth and your wares; you enriched the kings of the earth.

So notice that even there, you have the three groups, although they are not separated like they are in Revelation, and you have the kings of the earth. You also have the merchants. And then, finally, you have the ship owners and those involved in the shipping industry.

And all those three provide the models for the three groups now in Revelation 18 that mourn. And so now we're introduced based on Ezekiel 27 to the merchants. And the reason for their mourning in verses 11 through 17 is similar.

And that is that their self-seeking and their selfish lust for wealth has now been cut off because the source of their wealth, which was trade in association with Rome has now ceased because of Rome's destruction. Note the list of cargoes. And it's interesting here.

This is the only place where John composes an extensive list of luxury, which also has Old Testament background. But it seems to me that John has also tailored it to fit the precise merchandise and cargo that would have been imported into Rome. And now the picture is of merchants who have made themselves wealthy in participating in the importing of these luxurious items into Rome.

Many of these things are luxurious items that would have only been available and could be afforded by the wealthy. Some of these like wheat and grain would have been staples for the consumption of everyone. But back in chapter six, we saw at many times in Rome's history, even that would have been unaffordable to the normal person and even the poor people.

And only at its inflated price would it have been affordable only to the wealthy. But this list of cargo is very interesting. I think this list of cargo in verses 12 and 13 is another indication that John sees Babylon primarily as the city of Rome.

Because all of these, you can read in most commentaries, I don't want to go into detail as to exactly what these items are, but you can read in virtually any commentary description of them and even the connection with Rome and the fact that these were all imported by Rome. Most of these were lucrative in the trading business, things that would have been lucrative for traders and would have been prized by the elite members of the city of Rome. So, this list supports the portrayal of Rome as a city bent on excessive wealth and excessive luxury and a city characterized by its thirst and its lust for material goods, which is exactly what John criticizes Rome for.

But the merchants are now portrayed as also getting rich from these cargoes. But now that Rome has been destroyed, and now that Babylon Rome has been destroyed, they no longer are able to live luxuriously off Rome's wealth. There's one startling, actually, two elements I want to draw your attention to in this list, but one sort of startling.

Notice, for example, the mention of gold, silver, and precious stones, and also fine linen, and purple, and silk, as well as pearls. Twofold, number one, the picture of purple linen and also gold and precious stones goes back to the description of the prostitute. So this meant this is kind of the garb of the prostitute.

But also, even back in chapter 17 and verses 1 through 3, the description of the prostitute decked out in purple garments and gold and precious stones was also reflective not only of the attire of the prostitute but also of the ostentatious display of the wealth of Rome. And now we see that repeated here. But furthermore, we've already noted in connection with the description of the prostitute, this also anticipates the description of the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21, which is decked

out in precious gold and precious jewels, has gates of pearl and also is portrayed as a bride adorned for her husband.

So all this wealth anticipates that. But the thing that's rather interesting is the very last item is in the midst of suggesting, and notice how it moves from inanimate things like gold and silver and jewels to spices and wood products, and also finally to cloth products and things like that, and then food products like oil and wheat. But then it moves to living things such as cattle and sheep and horses and carriages.

And in the middle of that, it also includes the bodies and souls of men. Most likely, this added element reflects the slave trade, which was a significant part of the economy of Rome. And there have been all kinds of estimations as to the extent of slavery in Rome.

One could become a slave through various means. One of them was that one reason someone might become a slave was to sell themselves into slavery because of debt. Another reason would be that when Rome conquered a territory, the slaves would be imported.

So this is not racial slavery, but intriguingly, slavery of perhaps even people from the provinces of Rome that they have now imported as slaves. It's interesting that they are included within the group of sheep and cattle as if human bodies notice the mention of human bodies as if human bodies are now treated as commodities to be traded for luxury and for financial benefit in the same way cattle and sheep would as well. But John adds in human souls, perhaps to make clear exactly what's going on.

At the end of this list of things being traded, bodies are not just another commodity, but John says they're actually human souls. But Rome now is treating them as simply another commodity to be traded or imported so that they can gain wealth by. So you're getting this picture, though it's not prominent, it's still an important part of Rome's economy that their economy is gained at the expense of the rest of the empire and the world.

They are becoming wealthy and luxurious by exploiting other nations and even exploiting their own provinces so that Rome can increase in wealth and satisfy its lust and craving for excessive luxury. Like the kings of the earth, they mourn because their source of wealth, this list of cargo, has been removed. And note again the language in verse 14, the fruit of your desires.

So Rome is portrayed as lusting after, desiring luxury and wealth, and now that has been removed, the self-serving economic system and wealth of Rome have been destroyed. That is, Rome existed as we've seen to serve itself and even to the extent of exploiting and harming other nations even within their own provinces. Now, this

group also stands at a distance because, like the kings of the earth, the picture is probably that they fear judgment.

They don't want to participate in their own judgment. And now they pronounce woes on the city much like the kings of the earth did. So you'll notice what happens in all three of these is all three of these groups will, and we've seen that in the first two groups, it will involve their lament and mourning over Rome because of what it has lost due to Rome's destruction.

It will issue a woe for their destruction and then usually a depiction of them standing far off so as not to be involved in their destruction and their judgment. Verse 16 is then of the response of the merchants or the kings of the earth; verse 16 suggests that they cry out, Whoa, Whoa, Whoa, Whoa, Oh, great city dressed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, glittering with gold, precious stones, and pearls. Again, referring to the luxurious nature of Rome, referring back to 17 verse 4 and how the prostitute was depicted.

So clearly, the idea is these are the ones who have been seduced by Rome, who have been trapped and seduced into committing adultery with Rome by being involved in their godless, idolatrous economic system that is tailored solely for the benefit of Rome and its own thirst and lust for wealth and excessive luxury. And now, these merchants here are those who have committed adultery with Rome by sharing in her wealth. And then, in one hour, the great wealth has been brought to ruin.

So, probably one hour again, demonstrating here the sudden and the quickness and the sudden nature of the destruction of Babylon Rome. Not a literal word suggesting it only took one hour to destroy it, but one hour, the symbolic value of suggesting quickness and suddenness as characterizing the destruction of Babylon Rome. The final group, the final and third and final group, is the lament of the ship owners in verses 17 through 19.

We've already noted and read twice, once in its entirety, but a couple of sections from Ezekiel 27, the oracles against Tyre in Ezekiel that play a significant role here. The mention of the ship owners and those involved in trade through the shipping industry now lies behind John's mention of those involved in shipping who have made their wealth off maritime business in association with Rome. Now, they also stand and observe the devastating effect of the destruction of Babylon.

And that, in fact, seems to be the main focus of the third one. As I said, this third one seems to be a little bit more intense because John picks up the language from Ezekiel 27 and verses 28 through 33 of certain persons who put on sackcloth and throw dust on themselves and even roll in the dust in mourning for the downfall of Babylon. Therefore, the primary theme of this section seems to be the completely devastating effect that the downfall of Babylon now has upon those who depend on it.

And this is demonstrated by the fact that they now throw dust on their heads, which probably is not a sign of repentance, but simply a sign of sorrow and mourning. So these people are not to be pictured as repenting, although putting dust and ashes on your head elsewhere is a sign of repentance. Here, as it is in Ezekiel 27, it's simply a sign of mourning and sorrow, not for one's sins, but for the downfall of the city on which they became rich.

So this threefold repetition of mourners who lament over Rome's demise is mentioned here, and perhaps they've been divided into three because of the emphasis on the repetitive nature of three different groups suggesting this, but all of them have gotten rich off of Rome, and now they have lost the source of their wealth. So they all sit or stand observing the judgment of Rome, now pouring out laments of sorrow and pronouncing woes upon the city as they stand far off. All of this is meant to heighten the judgment of Rome by demonstrating its effects on those who benefited from it.

That is, those who committed adultery committed adultery with the city of Rome. Those that Rome seduced into participating in its wealth and getting rich off of Rome and its commerce. Now, this is meant this text, although interestingly, English translations don't make a break here, so you sort of miss this, but there is a clear break that should take place in chapter 18 at verse 20, or some kind of break should take place because now you have a clear contrast between the woes and laments of the three groups that got rich off of Rome that now lament over its destruction and judgment.

In verse 20, you are now introduced to a group of saints who by contrast, in verse 20, rejoice over the fall of Rome. So the three groups of kings of the earth, merchants and ship owners are not the only groups that respond to Rome's downfall. They respond in mourning because they grew wealthy and they were the ones seduced into the Roman economy to be rich off of it.

But now you have another group responding to the downfall of Rome, Babylon Rome, and that is the saints in verse 20. It says, Rejoice over her, O heaven. Rejoice, saints and apostles and prophets.

God has judged her for the way she has treated you. Interestingly too, chapter 18 basically describes in third person the different groups. Here is what the kings of the earth did, and the merchants did this, and here is what the ship owners did.

Now, in verse 20, it shifts to a second person, where heaven, saints, apostles, and prophets are addressed directly, and they are now commanded to rejoice because God has judged Babylon and avenged them. So verse 20 is sort of emphatic, so we should see a little bit of a shift between verses 19 and 20, with now the saints'

response being slightly more significant and meant to stand out in sharp relief against the response of the merchants to the downfall of Rome. It is intriguing, though, that in verse 20, the author appears to pick up Jeremiah 51 again.

John begins with Jeremiah 51 at the very beginning of the chapter, especially in verse 4. It probably lies behind the command to flee Babylon. But we have seen that John has departed from Jeremiah because he wants to critique Rome because of its economic practices, its idolatrousness, and particularly its seductive practices of seducing nations to participate in its wealth. And for that, John has gone to another oracle, that is, the oracles against Tyre, which condemned Tyre for its commerce and for its excessive luxury and wealth, the very thing that John wants to critique Rome for.

So John then went to Ezekiel, particularly chapter 27, for his portrayal of Rome and his critique of it. But then, in chapter 51, verse 48 of Jeremiah, we read, the heaven and earth and all that is in them will shout for joy over Babylon, for out of the north destroyers were attacked. So notice the mention of heaven and earth shouting over joy or rejoicing over Babylon in Jeremiah 51 verse 48.

That appears to lie behind verse 20, where heaven and all the saints and prophets are now rejoicing and are called upon to rejoice over the destruction of Babylon. So, the saints' response to Babylon's judgment was to avenge their blood and call for rejoicing. Now, John has returned to his primary model of Jeremiah chapter 51, which describes the judgment of Babylon. So that brings us to the end of the various responses to Babylon's downfall, one of them negative by the response of those who have been seduced to be involved in Rome's illegitimate and ill-gotten gain through their economic practices.

And now in verse 20, the complete opposite, the response of the saints, that God has now acted to vindicate them, to avenge them by now judging Babylon Rome and so the saints rejoice. The chapter ends then in verses 21 through 24 with a final summary of the devastation and the devastating effects of Babylon. And once again in 21 and 24, we seem temporarily to be out of order.

That is 21 through 24 seems to be an anticipation of Babylon's fall. So temporarily 21 through 24 may take place prior to verses 9 through 19, which clearly assumes Babylon has already fallen. Now you have all the people surrounding it lamenting and mourning its fall.

Now verses 21 through 24 seem to temporarily take you back before the fall of Babylon, but at the same time, it plays a significant role of further interpreting the devastation of Babylon and its effects. And further probably describing the basis for saints rejoicing in verse 20. So verses 21 through 24 further seem to describe the reason that the saints rejoice as they do in verse 20.

And so it actually begins with a prophetic act. Sometimes in prophetic texts, you see the prophets actually engaging in a kind of an act that has symbolic significance. And one of those is found once again in Jeremiah chapter 51.

In Jeremiah 51, the model John has been using to portray overall the downfall in judgment of historical Babylon, and John has drawn on that several times. Now in chapter 51 and verse 63, we find an interesting prophetic act or prophetic action that has symbolic significance. And here it is in verse 63.

I'll begin in verse 62. Then say, O Lord, you have said that you will destroy this place, Babylon 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 River. Then say, so will Babylon sink to rise no more. Because of the disaster I will bring upon her, her people will fall.

That provides a model for what happens here in verse 21: a mighty angel. You don't find a scroll tied to it, but an angel in a kind of a symbolic act, a prophetic symbolic act, picks up a millstone and throws it into the sea. And then, much like you found in Jeremiah 51, the angel interprets that and says, with such violence, the great city will also be thrown down and never be found again.

So, this symbolic act on the part of the angel from Jeremiah 21 is meant as a symbolic activity or symbolic representation of the casting down of Babylon, Rome itself. So you can see what John is doing. He's demonstrating that the historical fall of Babylon sort of typologically now is portrayed as the fall of kind of a new Babylon, and that is the city of Rome and the Roman Empire.

And verses 22 and 23 then, 22 and 23 further depict the result of this. And that is all signs of life in Babylon are going to be missing. This is a way of demonstrating once again, that all the common things of life that you would hear, the playing of flutes and harps and weddings, the grinding of a millstone, grinding grain, all those things, the light of a lamp that you would see in houses, all those will be snuffed out.

All of those will be gone as another indication of the extent and the complete nature of the destruction of Babylon. But note that 23 and 24 end by recapitulating the reasons for Babylon's fall. Number one, your merchants were the world's great men.

And by your magic spell, all the nations were led astray. In her was found the blood of the prophets and the saints and all who have been killed on the earth. So first of all, notice the mention of the great men, which probably suggests their arrogance and their self-glorification in direct opposition to the praise, worship, and glory that only God deserves in the hymns articulated in chapters four and five of Revelation.

So once more, the arrogance and self-glorification irrigating divine authority and power, claiming for oneself what belongs only to God. That is the first crime that Rome and the nations that participate in it are now guilty of. The second one is that her magic or sorcery leads the nations astray and how literally we're to take that or not.

The main point of repeating what John has already critiqued Rome for in chapters 17 and 18 is that Rome has seduced other nations into committing adultery with her. She is guilty of deceiving them and entrapping them in her deceptive, alluring, and seductive idolatries and economic practices. And then, finally, she is also responsible for the blood of God's people.

That is, we've already seen that theme. She is guilty of violence. That is, she is drunk with the blood of the saints.

She is guilty of the blood of those that she has persecuted. Probably also reflecting Jeremiah 51 and 49. Notice how it ends though.

It's not only the blood of the saints, but all people on the earth who have been killed because of her. Again, portraying Rome as an empire that spreads its rule through violence, that maintains its peace, maintains its rule, maintains its economy through violence. Jeremiah chapter 51 and verse 49 is probably the text that John draws upon.

Babylon must fall because of Israel's slain, just as the slain in all the earth has fallen because of Babylon. So notice in Jeremiah 51 and 49 that Babylon is guilty of slaying God's people, Israel, as well as those on earth. And now Revelation 18 ends with the blood of the prophets and the saints that Rome is guilty of, but also those who have been killed upon the earth.

So to conclude chapter 18, basically 18 is a call for the saints to rejoice over the downfall of Babylon, over the judgment of Babylon. Because the fall of Babylon demonstrates the justice of God's judgment in avenging the blood of the saints in vindicating them. But the author at the same time describes the basis for Babylon's judgment and fall, which should cause a rejoicing of the saints by giving us at least three reasons for Babylon's fall.

Articulated in chapter 17 and 18. Number one is that Babylon glorifies herself. Babylon, Rome sets herself up as God.

Babylon, Rome asserts the authority that belongs only to God and receives the worship and the glory that only God deserves. Chapter four and five of Revelation.

Second, Babylon, Rome is arrogant and excessive in its wealth, even at the expense of other nations.

Babylon, Rome is portrayed as lusting after wealth and luxury, as having a thirst for more and more material goods and doing so, even if it means exploiting other nations and even their own provinces. In addition to that this could be the third one, but in addition to the issue of wealth, they are also then, along with their own desire to accumulate wealth and their own consumption of excessive luxury, they have also caused other nations to commit adultery with them, entrapping them and enticing them into committing adultery that is being involved in their godless economic system that is solely aimed for the selfish gain of Rome itself. And then third, Babylon, Rome is guilty of extreme violence.

They have killed God's people. They are guilty of the blood of the saints, God's people primarily, but also guilty of those of other nations that they have put to death as well. In order to depict this, in order to describe Babylon, Rome's character, and her judgment, the author has drawn on numerous Old Testament texts, numerous Old Testament texts, such as Jeremiah, but also Ezekiel and Isaiah that depict the judgment and downfall of other historical nations who were guilty of the same crime, same crime.

So that Rome then is sort of seen as a combination of and emerging of all of these features now in the same way that God condemned and judged godless cities of the past. Once again, his people can be assured that he will judge another wicked, godless, idolatrous nation in the form of Rome. And so John can be certain of this because the Old Testament has told him and provided a model for God judging other idolatrous, wealthy, violent empires.

And historically, Rome indeed was judged a century later. And at one level, Revelation 17 and 18 was indeed fulfilled in the downfall of the Rome of John's day that he was facing in his day. And so Rome embodying all these other empires now suffers the same fate.

So John interprets that through other Old Testament prophetic texts. At the same time, I am convinced that probably, and just to make a brief comment on how we understand Babylon and Rome, John is clearly aiming his guns at the city of Rome, the empire of his day, and the emperors. I don't think there's any doubt about that.

But we've seen this before. Particularly when you get to 17 and 18, it becomes apparent that John has placed the judgment of Rome, the first-century city of Rome, against the backdrop of God's judgment on the larger world. And on the larger, we might say end time city, the city perhaps representing the entire world in opposition to God.

So it's not that John then sees Rome and then predicts a succession of empires. It's not that John thinks there might be a long gap between Rome and the final judgment. But the point is John has to help his readers see the nature of the situation and, in true apocalyptic fashion, to uncover the true nature of Rome and give them a perspective on their situation.

John not only sees and interprets their situation of first-century Rome, but probably portrays its destruction against the broader backdrop of the ultimate destruction of God's enemies and the ultimate judgment of the earth and of the world, which we'll see John is going to move through, move immediately to in chapter 19, for example, in just a moment. So we should probably see Rome and its destruction as, yes, historically fulfilled in first-century Rome. But again, by using an image, Babylon, that has a history in the Old Testament, it's almost as if then John has used a symbol that has its sort of archetypal or sort of provides a model that will eventually encompass the entire world, which God and His Lamb, Jesus Christ will bring to an end in a final judgment.

So, first-century Rome is now portrayed against the broader backdrop of God's final judgment on the entire world. Now the conclusion to the downfall of Babylon is found in chapters 19 and verses 1 through 6. And then in verses 6 through 10, we'll sort of have a final hymn sung and a transition. Actually, verse 6 could go with verses 1 through 5 because it's a final hymn that is sung.

But then 9 and 10 will provide a transition, kind of a conclusion to the Babylon Rome judgment scene and provide a transition into the next scene that begins in 19:11, which is the final judgment. But 19:1 through 6, in 18:20, we just saw that the saints were told to rejoice at the downfall of Babylon. All of heaven, the prophets and the apostles are now all to rejoice in the downfall of Babylon, though it says nothing about that.

But here, I think their rejoicing gets expanded. So let me read 19:1 through 6. After this, that is, after the events he saw in 18, I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting, hallelujah, salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for true and just are his judgments. He has condemned the great prostitute who corrupted the earth by her adulteries.

He has avenged on her the blood of his servants. And again, they shouted, hallelujah, the smoke of her goes up forever and ever. The 24 elders and four living creatures then fell down and worshiped God, who was seated on the throne, and they cried, amen, hallelujah.

Then a voice came from the throne saying, praise our God, all his servants, you who fear him, both small and great. Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like

the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder shouting, hallelujah, for our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory.

For the wedding of the Lamb has come and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear. Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.

Now, so this seems to be the hymns that back in chapter 8, verse 20, all of heaven was to cry out and rejoice with. Now we find all of heaven crying out and rejoicing in the form of a great multitude, in the form of the 24 elders and the four living creatures, in the form of a voice from the throne, now crying out in praise. Note, interestingly, the movement.

It begins with a great multitude in the beginning of verse 19, what sounded like the roar of a great multitude. Then, it gets narrowed down in verse 4 to the 24 elders and four living creatures. And then even more in verse 5, a voice that comes to it from a throne.

And then it broadens out again in verses 6 through 8 to another great multitude, where in a climactic scene, now you have a voice that sounds like the roar of rushing water and a loud peal of thunder. So note the movement from broader to very narrow, the voice from the throne and back out to encompass a voice like a great multitude, sounding like rushing water and thunder. The primary function of this, then, the primary theme of this from verse 18 as well, is to further interpret the judgment that has taken place by now indicating the rejoicing and praise of the saints.

I also note that all I want to do is demonstrate how it picks up some of the major themes from chapter 18. For example, note that God's judgment is described as holy and just. So that what happens in chapter 17 and 18 is to be described as a result of God's holy and righteous character.

On that basis, he now acts to judge a wicked and godless empire. Second, note again the repetition of the reason for this judgment, which is the crimes of Babylon or the sins of Babylon. They have corrupted the earth through their idolatrous practices and through their lust for wealth.

And they have led others and seduced others into participating in that. Third, note the emphasis on God avenging the blood of his saints. This probably links the text back to not only the prayer of the saints that we've seen several times, particularly mixed with incense that the angel poured out back in chapter 8, but also all the way back to the cry of the martyrs in chapter 6, verse 10.

How long, oh Lord, until you avenge our blood until you vindicate us. Now God vindicates his people by avenging their enemies, by judging their enemies. It's interesting that so far we've primarily seen vindication in terms of God judging the enemies of his people, avenging their blood.

Those who have persecuted God's people, those who have put them to death, those who have tried to destroy them because of their faithful witness, now God responds by vindicating them, by bringing judgment upon them. That's been a dominant theme so far. However, one part of the process of vindication we have not yet seen, clearly at least, is that God would respond to them positively.

That is not that he would just negatively judge their enemies, but God would vindicate them by rewarding them. We saw hints of that already, for example, back in chapter 7, a little bit in chapter 14 as well, and 15, where the saints stand victorious on the sea, having refused to submit to the beast and worship his image. Now, the saints stand victorious by the sea in a new exodus.

So we've already seen visions of God vindicating his saints by not only judging and punishing their enemies who have persecuted them and put them to death but now also by rewarding them, by vindicating them through reward, rewarding them by giving them their inheritance. We will see that the positive side of their vindication will then get articulated in more detail, starting with chapter 20 and going into chapter 22 as well. So, the cry of the saints interpreting the events of chapters 17 and 18, or the praise of the saints here in verses 1 through 6, actually 1 through 8, verse 6, the final cry, verses 7 and 8, are the content of that.

God has now avenged the blood of his saints by punishing and judging those who have harmed them and who have put them to death. Then, finally, notice the language of judgment as well. I draw in chapter 18, verses 8 and following, and reflecting the Old Testament text from Isaiah chapter 34 and 9 and 10, this language of smoke going up, of burning, as a symbol of judgment.

And now that is further described as the eternal judgment, as the basis, again, for the saints rejoicing. So, all of the themes of God's character, his holiness and justice and righteousness, as the basis for his judgment, the sin of Babylon in their own excessive luxury, but causing and seducing nations to be involved in that, God's desire to avenge his people by punishing his enemies, and then portraying judgment in terms of smoke coming up, all of those are simply a continuation of themes that we've already been introduced to in the narrative of Babylon's judgment and destruction in chapter 17 and 18. One other thing about, a couple of other observations about this final hymn in verses 6, 7, and 8 is, note that reference to the Almighty has begun to reign.

This, we've said, is a very significant theme. In fact, this almost repeats verbatim what we found in the seventh seal, or seventh trumpet in chapter 11, verse 17, which brought us to the very end, which was sort of an anticipation of, or snapshot of the final day of the Lord, where the kingdom of the world would now become the kingdom of God. Now we see that theme reiterated in verse 6, the Lord God Almighty reigns.

That is, finally, God's kingdom and his will in heaven have now finally encompassed the earth. The kingdom of this world has now become the kingdom of God, and God now reigns victorious over all things. In fulfillment of, we said, chapters 4 and 5, where God's sovereignty is acknowledged in heaven, must be worked out on earth.

Now, we find that with the destruction of Babylon, the kingdom of Babylon has been removed. The kingdom of the earth no longer belongs to Babylon Rome, but now it belongs to God, who is the almighty sovereign king over the whole universe. We said one of the questions Revelation answers, one of the major questions is, who is in control? Who is the sovereign ruler over all of the universe? Is it Babylon? Is it Rome? Or any other historical city? Or is it God only? And now God's kingdom on earth, God's kingdom in heaven, has now come down to earth.

We also see another significant theme that will get picked up later, which is the consummation of God's promises to his people, and here we begin to see the positive aspect of the vindication; God's promises to his people are now understood in terms of a wedding banquet. In verses 7 and 8 of chapter 19, the wedding of the Lamb has arrived, and his bride has made herself ready, and the fine linen, white bright linen was given to her. Now, the author shifts to banquet imagery, such as wedding banquet imagery, in verses 7 and 8. What lies behind this is probably once more Old Testament imagery, where Israel was portrayed as the bride of Yahweh, and Yahweh was her husband, and that provides the backdrop then, I think, for this portrayal, this eschatological portrayal of the end-time marriage between God and his people.

Although now in distinction from the Old Testament text, the people of God are no longer limited to Old Testament ethnic Israel but now include people from every tribe and tongue and nation and language, centered around the Messiah Jesus Christ, and they now become his bride. One of the texts that probably provides the background for this is a text that will occur later on in Revelation, and that is Isaiah chapter 61, Isaiah is well known for using nuptial imagery, marriage language, and nuptial language for describing God's eschatological end time relationship to his people. One of those texts is Isaiah chapter 61, and in verse 10, Isaiah chapter 61 and verse 10, I delight greatly in the Lord, for my soul rejoices in my God, for he has clothed me with garments of salvation, and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with jewels.

So this language here of a bride adorning herself, and now being portrayed as a bride prepared for the wedding, and now presented to the bridegroom, which is Jesus Christ, now reaches its climax and fulfillment, as anticipated from Isaiah. But as we suggested, the difference is now the people of God are not just ethnic Israel, but includes Israel, but also includes people from other nations who now are the bride of the Lamb. The white robes, the author interprets as the deeds of the saints, probably the white robes again here signify their purity, the fact that they've remained unstained from the Roman rule, participating in its adulterous, idolatrous practices, unlike the nations who were seduced into committing adultery with Rome.

Now, the people of God, instead of being adulterers, are presented as the bride of the Lamb, Jesus Christ, and now they wear the clothing demonstrating their victory, their purity, and their righteousness as they stand before Jesus Christ. The language here, too, of a wedding banquet may reflect this notion of a wedding banquet as symbolic of eschatological salvation and may also reflect Jesus' parables. Chapter 22 of Matthew, Matthew 22:1-14, is a parable of a wedding banquet and those who are invited to it.

Matthew chapter 25 is the well-known parable of the ten virgins, five who are foolish, five who are wise, in the context of preparation for a wedding. So the banquet language, although it probably has background elsewhere as well, may be another example of John's contact with the Jesus tradition, and with Jesus' own teaching, and his teaching on the eschatological wedding banquet as a symbol of their final eschatological salvation. Another similarity that John may be drawing on, or at least aware of, is what Paul does with the metaphor also in Ephesians chapter 5, where the relationship between the husband and wife becomes a model for the relationship between Christ and his church, as his bride which he will prepare, which he will present holy and blameless before him.

That may be the picture that we find here. The imagery of a bride in a wedding banquet clearly symbolizes intimacy, the intimacy and close relationship and communion between the people of God and the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Two final things to wrap this section up.

Note verse 9, the command to write. A similar command is found throughout Revelation. You find this several times in Revelation.

John is commanded to write. It's not clear whether he is actually writing as he sees these things, or just later on after he's seen these things, it's to ensure that he will write them. No matter what the case, the command to write is simply a way of affirming the importance of what John sees, and what John hears.

And then, finally, in verse 10, we find that interesting scene where John is tempted to bow down and worship the angel who has led him on this visionary tour of the

destruction of Babylon. And what is intriguing is the angel's response: Don't worship me; I'm just a servant, so worship God. You find this scene occurring twice; it will occur again in chapter 22.

And we've seen the significance of that is that in the context of chapter 5 where the Lamb is worshipped alongside God, how can that not contradict an environment that is exclusively monotheistic? The angel says, as exalted as an angelic being as there may be, the angel still says, don't worship me. So, however exalted an angelic being there may be, nothing else is worthy of worship except God alone, which breeds a strict monotheism. There's only one God who is worthy of worship.

To worship anything, however exalted an angelic being, to worship anything else is idolatry. But how can, in the context of statements like that, how can you have a scene like chapter 5 where the Lamb is worshipped with the same language and the same worship as God was in chapter 4 and ends up sitting on the same throne unless in some way Jesus Christ the Lamb is God himself? So that the Lamb can be worshipped without violating the monotheism that still lies behind the book of Revelation. So now this prepares us for one final battle scene in chapter 19, verses 11 through 21.

In our Acts section, we'll look at those verses and look at a little bit overall what's the function of this battle scene, but in more detail, look at some of the features of the final battle scene in chapter 19, verses 11 through 21.

This is Dr. Dave Mathewson in his course on the book of Revelation. This is session 24, Revelation chapter 18:9-19:10, The Lament and Joy over Babylon's Fall.