

Dr. David L. Mathewson, Revelation, Session 24, Revelation 18-19 Lament/joy over Babylon's Fall 6-Min. Video Overview

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Alright, today we're diving into this really dramatic, ancient story about the fall of a superpower. It's a tale of total, catastrophic collapse, but what's so fascinating is who's weeping and who's celebrating when all the dust settles. And that's really the big question we're tackling here, right? We're going to look at one single, world-shaking event, but through the eyes of two totally opposite reactions.

You've got intense mourning on one side, and this just explosive celebration on the other. So the scene is set around the sudden and total collapse of a city called Babylon. Now, right off the bat, I've got to say, this probably isn't the historical Babylon you're picturing from your history books.

In this text, Babylon is actually a codename, a symbol for the Roman Empire in the first century. Immensely powerful, unbelievably wealthy, and, as we'll see, deeply exploitative. This phrase gets repeated over and over, and you can just feel the shock of the event.

Now when the text says one hour, it's not talking about 60 minutes on a clock. Nope. It's a symbol for just how swift, decisive, and shockingly sudden the empire's downfall really is.

One minute it's there, the next, it's gone. Okay, so this massive city is just toast. And the first thing the story zooms in on is the reaction down on Earth.

And wow, the grief is palpable, but it's coming from some very specific groups of people. So who's crying? Well, the text points a finger at three main groups. The kings of the earth, the global merchants, and the big-time ship owners.

And you've got to ask, what's the common thread here? Well, they all got incredibly rich from Rome's massive economic system. And this right here is the absolute key. They aren't mourning because a great civilization did terrible things or because people have suffered.

No way. They are mourning because their personal source of wealth, their golden goose, has been completely wiped out. At the end of the day, their tears are all about the money.

I mean, if you want to get a sense of just how huge this economic machine was, just check out this list of cargo. It's like the ultimate luxury shopping list of the ancient world. You've got precious metals, super expensive fabrics, exotic spices.

It's just this endless river of luxury goods flowing straight into the heart of the empire. And then, you get to the end of the list, and it just hits you like a ton of bricks. The text is crystal clear here.

They're talking about the slave trade. Human beings are listed right alongside cattle and spices. It's just another commodity to be bought and sold.

It's absolutely chilling. So this cry? I mean, it just perfectly captures the whole mindset on earth, doesn't it? The entire focus is on the great wealth that's been lost. Their whole world, a world built on luxury and exploitation, has just vanished in the blink of an eye.

Okay, so now let's do a complete 180. Because while all the kings and merchants are wailing on earth, the reaction in the heavenly realm could not be more different. It's a full-on party.

It's pure, unfiltered joy. So that's the sound you hear from heaven. Not whoa, whoa, but hallelujah.

The exact same event that's causing so much sorrow on earth is seen as a moment of salvation, a moment of true justice. Which is just wild, right? How can this same event produce such polar opposite reactions? And here's where you see that difference in black and white. On earth, the mourning is all about losing money.

It's a completely selfish focus. But in heaven, it's all about justice. The focus isn't on the economy.

It's on the victims of this brutal empire who have finally, finally been avenged. So what did Babylon actually do to deserve all this? What were the crimes that were so awful they brought on this kind of judgment? Well, the text lays out the charges pretty clearly. But before we even get to the list of charges, the text paints this incredible symbolic picture for us.

You have this mighty angel who picks up a giant millstone, you know, one of those huge stones for grinding grain, and just hurls it into the sea. It's a symbol of how violent and permanent this destruction is. She's gone.

For good. Sunk to the bottom. Never to be seen again.

So, when you boil it all down, the judgment rests on three main crimes. First, arrogance and self-glorification. The empire thought it was a god.

Second, deceptive wealth and exploitation. It got the whole world hooked on its corrupt economic system. And third, just brutal violence and persecution.

And when the text talks about that violence, it does not hold back. The imagery is intense. It says the empire was drunk with the blood of the saints, meaning its critics and martyrs, and basically gets blamed for all the bloodshed that happened as it clawed its way to the top.

And just to make sure we really get it, the story wraps up with this super powerful contrast using the image of two different women to symbolize two very different communities. So on the one hand, you've got Babylon, who's called the prostitute. And look at what she's wearing: the very same luxury goods her merchants were trading.

She's all about that seductive, corrupt power, and, well, we know how our story ends. But then you have the bride, and she's dressed in simple, clean linen, which represents purity and righteousness. She stands for God's vindicated people.

And her fate isn't destruction; it's a huge wedding celebration. You literally couldn't get a more stark contrast between corruption and redemption. And that's where this ancient story leaves us, with a really challenging question for our own time.

You know, when we look around our world today, at our own systems of power and wealth, what are we cheering for? Are we celebrating the bottom line, or are we celebrating justice for everyone?