

Dr. Dave Mathewson, Revelation, Session 24, Revelation 18-19 Lament/joy over Babylon's Fall

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All right. Hey, everyone. Welcome back.

Ready for another deep dive? Today, we're tackling some seriously symbolic stuff in Revelation, chapters 18.9 through 19.10, to be exact. Ah, yeah. It's a fascinating section.

We're going to be exploring the reactions, and some of them are pretty intense, to the fall of Babylon, which, you know, in this context, we're talking about Rome, and we're working with a lecturer, Dr. Dave Mathewson. Oh, excellent choice. Yeah.

He really breaks it down in a way that makes you think: who's happy? Who's not? About Rom biting the dust. It's not all, you know, sunshine and roses when an empire falls. That's for sure.

The ramifications are complex, to say the least. Mathewson points out that some folks are, well, devastated. Like, picture those kings of the earth, right? Used to the high life, all the perks that come with being Rom's buddy.

Living it up on Rom's dime, you could say. Exactly. And suddenly, it's all gone.

Poof. Luxury lifestyle, economic benefits. Nope.

Gone. It's interesting, isn't it, how the text highlights those who benefited most from Rome's power structure. It's not just the kings, either.

Mathewson points out the merchants. Oh, yeah. The merchants.

Their whole world revolved around this trade in luxury goods. We're talking gold, silver, precious stones, all those fancy fabrics, purple dyes, silks. The finer things in life, as they say.

But Mathewson, he even lists things like spices, livestock. I mean, it's this whole network of trade that's suddenly disrupted. It's like pulling the rug out from under an entire economy.

Precisely. And here's where it gets, well, a bit unsettling. The text also includes bodies and souls of men in that list of traded goods.

Yeah, that's a stark reminder of the slave trade, isn't it? Rom's extravagance? It was built on some pretty dark stuff. Absolutely. And that detail really underscores the moral critique at the heart of Revelation.

It's not just about a city falling. It's about an entire system collapsing under the weight of its own corruption. It's like that saying: the bigger they are, the harder they fall.

Yeah. But with this, you know, cosmic divine justice twist to it. You could say that.

Mathewson goes on to discuss the ship owners, too. They're in a similar predicament. They're businesses, their whole livelihood tied to Rome's maritime trade.

Caught. Gone. Wrecked.

Just like that. Mathewson describes them throwing dust on their heads, rolling around in grief. The imagery is intense.

It's a powerful depiction of despair, that's for sure. So we've got these folks, these kings, merchants, ship owners, all grounded in sorrow because their gravy train is just derailed. But what about the flip side? There had to be people who were relieved, even overjoyed, by Rome's downfall, right? Oh, absolutely.

And the source material makes a very clear distinction here. While some are mourning, the saints, the apostles, the prophets, they are rejoicing. Big-time celebration.

They see Rome's collapse as a vindication of all their suffering, a sign that God's justice is finally prevailing. That's got to be an incredible feeling, like a weight lifted after years of oppression. Yes.

And the source material really emphasizes this with some powerful imagery. Mathewson talks about a massive crowd roaring like thunder, elders and these heavenly beings prostrating themselves in worship. And almost like a cosmic victory party.

And then there's this voice from the throne calling for praise. It's a scene of pure jubilation, and it ties directly back to the prayers of those who were martyred under Rome, you know, those cries for justice. Well, they've been answered in a resounding way.

It's not just about punishing the bad guys, is it? It's about righting the wrongs, lifting up those who are crushed, like cosmic karma, but with a lot more hope and purpose. Yes. And that brings us to one of the most fascinating parts of this section.

The wedding banquet described in Revelation 19.7 to 8. Okay. Yeah. It's got to be more than just a fancy dinner party, right? Mathewson makes it clear that this is dripping with symbolism.

Oh, absolutely. Think of it this way. The banquet represents the ultimate union of Christ and his bride, which is the church, a symbol of complete fulfillment, eternal joy, and belonging.

Wow. That puts a whole new spin on wedding planning. But seriously, that's a beautiful image, especially when you contrast it with the despair of those clinging to Rome's wreckage.

Exactly. It's this stark reminder that even amidst destruction and judgment, there's a promise of something truly incredible for those who stay true to their faith. And speaking of staying true, there's this detail about the bride wearing fine linen, which Mathewson says symbolizes the righteous actions of the faithful.

It's like the complete opposite of those luxury goods the merchants were hawking. Precisely. A visual representation of the stark difference between those who chase worldly wealth and those who prioritize spiritual riches.

This is where Mathewson kind of threw me for a loop. He talks about this moment where John, the author of Revelation, tries to worship an angel, and the angel's like, "Whoa there, buddy, wrong target. Seems kind of random, doesn't it? Not at all.

Remember, Revelation is full of symbolic language, and this is no exception. What seems like a minor detail actually reinforces the strict monotheism of the text. Okay.

So amidst all the wild visions and symbolism, the core message remains clear. Only God is worthy of worship. Pretty important point, especially when you're talking about this kind of chaos and upheaval.

Absolutely. It all comes back to that core theme of divine justice. The fall of Babylon or Rome isn't just a historical event.

It's a powerful symbol of God's judgment on all forms of wickedness and oppression. Okay. So we've got sorrow.

We've got celebration, cosmic justice, and a wedding feast fit for eternity. Where do we go from here? Well, the real question is, what does all of this mean for you? We've seen how Rome's fall impacted those deeply tied to its system, but we've also seen the hope and vindication offered to those who suffered under its oppression. Where do you see yourself in this story? Yeah, that's it, isn't it? The heart of the matter.

This isn't just ancient history. It's a reflection of us, human nature, the systems we build. It's like looking in a mirror, but the mirror is showing us this messed-up empire from centuries ago, and yet it feels familiar somehow.

Exactly. And Mathewson really brings that point home when he talks about the positive side of God's vindication. Right.

It's not just about fire and brimstone and punishment. He points out that God doesn't just punish the wicked. He rewards the faithful.

Absolutely. This idea of reward, of eternal fellowship with Christ, it's huge in Revelation. And it's beautifully depicted in this imagery of the wedding banquet.

Remember we talked about the promise of fulfillment, belonging. Yeah, like finding your true home after being lost in the wilderness. Perfect analogy.

It's this message of hope, especially for those who are going through tough times, facing their own demons, so to speak. It reminds us that there's a greater purpose, a future reward for those who stay true to their values, their faith. Okay.

So there's hope for those who suffered under Rome, but what about Rome itself? I mean, the way its destruction is described is pretty intense. Mathewson uses that image of a millstone being thrown into the sea. Right.

That image comes from the book of Jeremiah, actually, and it's meant to emphasize the complete and utter destruction of Babylon. There's no coming back from that. Like wiping the slate clean, making space for something new, something better.

Exactly. And it's not just physical destruction either. It's about purging wickedness, restoring God's order, creating a world where justice prevails.

Those who were oppressed can finally experience peace. You know, Matthewson makes it really clear that Rome's fault isn't just about one city or even one empire. He says it's a model for how God ultimately judges all forms of evil and oppression.

That's crucial. We're not just reading about ancient history, right? We're being given this message about the consequences of choosing wickedness and the ultimate triumph of good. It's a message that echoes through history.

It has implications for us today. Speaking of implications, there's this part in the lecture where Matthewson lays out the specific reasons for Babylon's fall, and it really got me thinking about our own world, the systems we live in now. He talks about self-glorification, excessive wealth and exploitation, and violence against the innocent.

Pretty heavy stuff. Yeah. And unfortunately, those themes, they're still very much alive today, even if we don't have a literal Babylon to point to.

That's why engaging with these ancient texts is so important. They hold up a mirror to our own society, challenge us to examine our values, and question the systems we're part of. Are we contributing to injustice, benefiting from the exploitation of others? Tough questions, but essential to ask.

It's a call to action, isn't it? To actually work towards dismantling these systems, building a world that reflects God's justice and His compassion. Absolutely. The fall of Babylon is a warning, but it's also a source of hope.

It warns us of the consequences of embracing wickedness, but it offers hope for a future where God's reign of justice and peace prevails. Before we wrap up, there's one more point from Matthewson's lecture I wanted to touch on. He talks about this concept of vindication and how it's not just about punishing the wicked, but also about rewarding the faithful.

Yes, that's an important distinction. It reminds us that God's justice isn't solely focused on retribution, but on restoration and balance, ensuring that good ultimately triumphs over evil. And that triumph is beautifully depicted in that imagery of the wedding banquet, right? Where God's people are finally united with their Savior, a celebration of eternal joy and fellowship.

Exactly. A powerful image of hope. It reminds us that even in the midst of trials and suffering, there's a greater purpose at work, a glorious future waiting for those who remain faithful.

This whole idea of adultery with systems that Matthewson brings up really gets you thinking: what does that look like in our world today? That's the question we all need to

wrestle with. Are we so entangled in these systems of power, wealth, exploitation, that we've lost sight of what truly matters? Have we compromised our integrity for the sake of comfort and convenience? And it's not about pointing fingers or judging others. It's about taking a hard look in the mirror, asking ourselves those tough questions about our own complicity.

What compromises are we making? What choices are we making that might be contributing to injustice? And even more importantly, what can we do to change? How can we disentangle ourselves from those harmful systems and work towards creating a more just, more equitable world? It's like Matthewson's giving us this ancient roadmap, but it's up to us to navigate the terrain of our modern lives, find our own path towards righteousness. You got it. We all have a role to play in building that better future, a future where justice prevails and all people can experience the fullness of God's love, His grace.

Yeah, it's like we're each being challenged to build our own arc, you know, to carry us through these turbulent times. And to make sure that arc is built with, well, timbers of justice and compassion, not the greed and self-interest that ultimately doomed Babylon. Powerful image.

Matthewson ends his lecture with this really striking reminder. The fall of Babylon isn't just some isolated historical event. It's this timeless symbol of God's judgment on all wickedness, all oppression.

It's a pattern, you know, a pattern that repeats itself throughout history. Almost like a universal law, like gravity, but for morality: what goes up must come down. And when those ups are built on the backs of others, on exploitation and injustice, the fall is going to be that much harder.

It's heavy stuff, but it's not all doom and gloom, right? I mean, this theme of divine judgment, it also comes with a promise, a reminder that ultimately good triumphs over evil. Absolutely. Revelation, it's not just about predicting the future.

It's about transforming the present. It's a call to action, an invitation to align ourselves with God's values, to resist evil in all its forms, to work towards a world where justice and love prevail. So it's not just about avoiding that adultery with these corrupt systems, but about actively building something better in its place.

Exactly. We need to be the architects of a new reality, a reality rooted in compassion, fairness, and respect for all people. That's a challenge worth taking on.

As we wrap up our deep dive into Revelation, I want to encourage you to keep exploring these themes- you know, justice, vindication, and that ultimate hope that we've uncovered today. Don't just let these ideas sit there; wrestle with them, let them challenge you, let them inspire you to action. And keep asking those tough questions.

How can I avoid adultery with the systems of my time? How can I build a life, a community, a world that reflects God's heart for justice and righteousness? It's a lifelong journey, but it's a journey worth taking. Couldn't agree more. Thanks for diving deep with us.

Until next time, keep seeking, keep questioning, and keep building that arc.