



THE REVELATION OF JOHN

Bible Study 45

Text: Rev. 19:1-10

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1. What the text meant. Exegesis of the Text:

Historical Aspects: A. [The Heavenly Celebration](#), vv. 1-8

External History B. [The Angelic Instruction to John](#), vv. 9-10

Internal History

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Genre

Literary Setting

Literary Structure

2. What the text means.

Celebrating the Downfall

Greek NT

La Biblia de las Américas

NRSV

NLT

19.1 Μετά ταῦτα ἤκουσα ὡς φωνὴν μεγάλην ὄχλου πολλοῦ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ λεγόντων·

19.1 Después de esto oí como una gran voz de una gran multitud en el cielo, que decía:

19.1 After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying,

19.1 After this, I heard the sound of a vast crowd in heaven shouting,

ἀλληλουϊά· ἡ σωτηρία καὶ ἡ δόξα καὶ ἡ δύναμις τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν,

¡Aleluya! La salvación y la gloria y el poder pertenecen a nuestro Dios,

“Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power to our God,

“Hallelujah! Salvation is from our God. Glory and power belong to him alone.

2 ὅτι ἀληθινὰ καὶ δίκαια αἱ κρίσεις αὐτοῦ·

PORQUE SUS JUICIOS SON VERDADEROS Y JUSTOS,

2 for his judgments are true and just; he has judged the great whore

2 His judgments are just and true.

ὅτι ἔκρινεν τὴν πόρνην τὴν μεγάλην ἥτις ἔφθειρεν τὴν γῆν ἐν τῇ πορνείᾳ αὐτῆς, καὶ ἔξεδίκησεν τὸ αἷμα τῶν δούλων αὐτοῦ ἐκ χειρὸς αὐτῆς.

pues ha juzgado a la gran ramera que corrumpía la tierra con su inmoralidad,

who corrupted the earth with her fornication, and he has avenged on her the blood of his servants.”

He has punished the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and he has avenged the murder of his servants.”

3 Καὶ δευτέρον εἶρηκαν· ἀλληλουϊά·

Y HA VENGADO LA SANGRE DE SUS SIERVOS EN ELLA.

3 Once more they said, “Hallelujah!

3 Again and again their voices rang,

καὶ ὁ καπνὸς αὐτῆς ἀναβαίνει εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων.

3 Y dijeron por segunda vez: ¡Aleluya!

The smoke goes up from her forever and ever.”

“Hallelujah! The smoke from that city ascends forever and forever!”

4 καὶ ἔπεσαν οἱ πρεσβύτεροι οἱ εἴκοσι τέσσαρες καὶ τὰ τέσσαρα ζῶα καὶ προσεκύνησαν τῷ θεῷ τῷ καθημένῳ ἐπὶ τῷ θρόνῳ λέγοντες·

EL HUMO DE ELLA SUBE POR LOS SIGLOS DE LOS SIGLOS.

4 And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who is seated on the throne, saying,

4 Then the twenty-four elders and the four living beings fell down and worshiped God, who was sitting on the throne. They cried out,

ἀμὴν ἀλληλουϊά.

4 Y los veinticuatro ancianos y los cuatro seres vivientes se postraron y adoraron a Dios, que está sentado en el trono, y decían:

“Amen. Hallelujah!”

“Amen! Hallelujah!”

5 Καὶ φωνὴ ἀπὸ τοῦ θρόνου ἐξῆλθεν λέγουσα·

5 Y del trono salió una voz que decía:

“Praise our God, all you his servants, and all who fear him, small and great.”

5 And from the throne came a voice that said,

αἰνεῖτε τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν πάντες οἱ δούλοι αὐτοῦ

Alabad a nuestro Dios todos sus siervos,

6 Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunderpeals, crying

“Praise our God, all his servants, from the least to the greatest, all who fear him.”

[καὶ] οἱ φοβούμενοι
αὐτόν,
οἱ μικροὶ καὶ οἱ
μεγάλοι.

6 Καὶ ἤκουσα ὡς φωνὴν
ὄχλου πολλοῦ καὶ ὡς φωνὴν
ὑδάτων πολλῶν καὶ ὡς
φωνὴν βροντῶν ἰσχυρῶν
λεγόντων·

ἀλληλουϊά,
ὅτι ἔβασίλευσεν κύριος
ὁ θεὸς [ἡμῶν] ὁ
παντοκράτωρ.

7 χαίρωμεν καὶ ἀγαλλιῶμεν
καὶ δῶσωμεν τῇ
δόξαν αὐτῷ,

ὅτι ἦλθεν ὁ γάμος τοῦ
ἀρνίου καὶ ἡ γυνὴ
αὐτοῦ ἠτοίμασεν
ἑαυτὴν

8 καὶ ἐδόθη αὐτῇ ἵνα
π ε ρ ι β ἄ λ η τ α ι
βύσσινον λαμπρὸν
καθαρόν·

τὸ γὰρ βύσσινον τὰ
δικαιώματα τῶν ἁγίων ἐστίν.

9 Καὶ λέγει μοι· γράψον·
μακάριοι οἱ εἰς τὸ δεῖπνον τοῦ
γάμου τοῦ ἀρνίου κεκλημένοι.
καὶ λέγει μοι· οὗτοι οἱ λόγοι
ἀληθινοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ εἰσιν. 10
καὶ ἔπεσα ἔμπροσθεν τῶν
ποδῶν αὐτοῦ προσκυνῆσαι
αὐτῷ. καὶ λέγει μοι· ὄρα μή·
σύνδουλός σου εἰμι καὶ τῶν
ἀδελφῶν σου τῶν ἐχόντων
τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ· τῷ
θεῷ προσκύνησον. ἡ γὰρ
μαρτυρία Ἰησοῦ ἐστὶν τὸ
πνεῦμα τῆς προφητείας.

los que le teméis,
los pequeños y los
grandes.

6 Y oí como la voz de una
gran multitud, como el es-
truendo de muchas aguas
y como el sonido de fuertes
truenos, que decía:

¡Aleluya!
Porque el Señor nuestro
Dios Todopoderoso
reina.

7 Regocijémonos y alegré-
monos, y démosle a
El la gloria,
porque las bodas del
Cordero han llegado
y su esposa se ha
preparado.

8 Y a ella le fue concedido
vestirse de lino fino,
resplandeciente y
limpio,

porque las acciones justas
de los santos son el lino fino.

9 Y el ángel me dijo: Es-
cribe: “Bienaventurados los
que están invitados a la cena
de las bodas del Cordero.” Y
me dijo: Estas son palabras
verdaderas de Dios. 10 En-
tonces caí a sus pies para
adorarle. Y me dijo: No hagas
eso; yo soy consiervo tuyo y
de tus hermanos que poseen
el testimonio de Jesús; adora
a Dios. Pues el testimonio
de Jesús es el espíritu de la
profecía.

out,
“Hallelujah!
For the Lord our God the
Almighty reigns.

7 Let us rejoice and exult
and give him the glo-
ry,

for the marriage of the
Lamb has come, and
his bride has made
herself ready;

8 to her it has been grant-
ed to be clothed with
fine linen, bright and
pure”

— for the fine linen is the
righteous deeds of the saints.

9 And the angel said
to me, “Write this: Blessed
are those who are invited to
the marriage supper of the
Lamb.” And he said to me,
“These are true words of
God.” 10 Then I fell down at
his feet to worship him, but
he said to me, “You must not
do that! I am a fellow servant
with you and your comrades
who hold the testimony of
Jesus. Worship God! For
the testimony of Jesus is the
spirit of prophecy.”

6 Then I heard again what
sounded like the shout of a
huge crowd, or the roar of
mighty ocean waves, or the
crash of loud thunder:

“Hallelujah!
For the Lord our God, the
Almighty, reigns.

7 Let us be glad and re-
joice and honor him.

For the time has come
for the wedding feast
of the Lamb, and his
bride has prepared
herself.

8 She is permitted to wear
the finest white lin-
en.”

(Fine linen represents the
good deeds done by the peo-
ple of God.)

9 And the angel said,
“Write this: Blessed are those
who are invited to the wed-
ding feast of the Lamb.” And
he added, “These are true
words that come from God.”

10 Then I fell down at his feet
to worship him, but he said,
“No, don’t worship me. For I
am a servant of God, just like
you and other brothers and
sisters who testify of their
faith in Jesus. Worship God.
For the essence of prophecy
is to give a clear witness for
Jesus.”

INTRODUCTION

What a contrast! On earth the downfall of Babylon occasions funeral dirges, but in heaven it prompts extensive celebrations! This pericope of vv. 1-10 brings to a close the many different disclosures of the impending downfall of Babylon / Rome which have their beginnings in chapter six and reach a climax in chapters seventeen and eighteen. What follows beginning in 19:11 through chapter 20 is the destruction of Babylon by Christ descending on a white horse of victory. This in turn signals the end of human history and the beginning of the eternal order with the great judgment of God as the turning point.

One needs to carefully examine these heavenly celebrations if proper understanding is to happen. All of those in heaven from God to angels to the saints who have already died celebrate two things in the downfall

of Babylon: the triumph of God as holy, just, and powerful, and the vindication of Him in inflicting judgment upon the evil and evil people who have harmed His people on earth. The celebrations focus on God’s power and righteousness.

In this celebration we who are His people still having to deal with evil around us on earth should find hope and encouragement. God indeed does reign supremely. Evil is doomed to a crushing defeat. We can celebrate the ultimate victory ahead of time just like those in heaven did.

1. What did the text mean to the first readers?

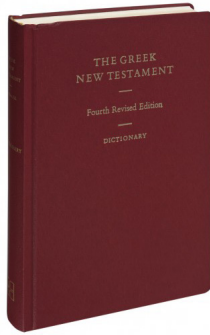
As is usually the case in Revelation, the literary aspects contribute more to the interpretation than do the historical aspects, largely due to the apocalyptic vi-

sion nature of the text.

Historical Aspects:

The historical aspect needing consideration here is the *Transmission History* that analyzes the hand copying of this passage from the earliest to the latest known manuscripts.

External History. As reflected in the readings of the hundreds of existing manuscripts the text of this passage is more stable than has been true with the very complex expressions in chapter eighteen. The editors of *The Greek New Testament* (UBS 4th rev ed) found only three places where alternative readings might alter the translation of the passage.



19:5 [καὶ] οἱ φοβούμενοι, [and/even] those fearing, {C}.¹ The impact of adding or omitting καὶ is very minimal either way. It represents a stylistic issue for later copyists in smoothing out the syntax according to patterns of writing Greek at the time and place of their copying this passage.² The weight of evidence, especially external evidence, favors the inclusion of καὶ in the text.

19:6 κύριος ὁ θεός [ἡμῶν], the Lord the God [of us], {C}.³ The issue here revolves around both the ¹{C} καὶ οἱ φοβούμενοι A 051 (0229 omit οἱ) 205 209 1006 1611 1841 1854 2030 2053 2062 2329 2344 Byz [046] it^{ar}, sig.¹ vg syr^{ph}, h cop^{bo} arm eth^{mss} Andrew; Primasius Apringius Beatus // οἱ φοβούμενοι & C P copsa, boms eth

[Kurt Aland et al., *The Greek New Testament*, Fourth Revised Edition (with Apparatus); *The Greek New Testament*, 4th Revised Edition (with Apparatus) (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft; Stuttgart, 2000).]

²“The variant reading has little significance for translation since the difference is one of style and not meaning. The presence of καὶ is supported by most witnesses, but it is absent from a few good witnesses. Copyists may have added it to avoid having clauses without a conjunction connecting them. Or copyists may have omitted it out of concern that readers would think καὶ here meant ‘and’ (referring to a second group) rather than ‘even.’ Since external evidence and transcriptional probabilities (what a copyist would do) are so evenly balanced, καὶ is put in brackets to indicate uncertainty regarding the original text. NRSV (similarly NJB) translates the longer text as ‘Praise our God, all you his servants, and all who fear him, small and great.’ But if καὶ is here exegetical, meaning ‘even’ or ‘namely,’ then ‘those who fear God’ refers to the same people as ‘all of his servants.’ A better rendering may be ‘Praise our God, all you his servants, that is, all who fear him, small and great.’” [[Roger L. Omanson and Bruce Manning Metzger, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament: An Adaptation of Bruce M. Metzger’s Textual Commentary for the Needs of Translators* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006), 546–547.]

³{C} κύριος ὁ θεός ἡμῶν & 1611 1854 2030 2053 2062 2329 2344 Byz [P 046] it^{ar}, (sig) vg syr^h cop^{sams} arm Apringius Beatus // ὁ θεός ὁ κύριος ἡμῶν &* // κύριος ὁ θεός A 1006 1841 it^{ar} syr^{ph} cop^{sams}, bo Cyprian // ὁ θεός ἡμῶν 051 205 209 Andrew // κύριος syr^{ph}* cop^{boms} (Primasius add ἡμῶν)

inclusion or omission of both ὁ θεός, God, and ἡμῶν, our. The meaning of the phrase is essentially the same which ever reading is adopted:⁴

reigns the Lord

reigns the Lord God

reigns the Lord our God

The balance of evidence favors including both although the evidence is more divided with the pronoun ἡμῶν, thus the brackets in the printed Greek text.

19:7 δώσωμεν, let us give, {C}.⁵ The issue here centers on whether the aorist subjunctive or the future indicative spelling is original. Both χαίρωμεν and ἀγαλλιώμεν before it are the hortatory subjunctive but present tense. The shift to the aorist tense with δώσωμεν was unexpected and confusing. This led some copyists to shift over to the indicative, ‘we will give,’ rather than the subjunctive ‘Let us give.’⁶ The external evidence favors the indicative δώσομεν but internally the very rare aorist subjunctive δώμεν provides a much better basis for explaining the origin of the alternatives, and fits the

[Kurt Aland et al., *The Greek New Testament*, Fourth Revised Edition (with Apparatus); *The Greek New Testament*, 4th Revised Edition (with Apparatus) (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft; Stuttgart, 2000).]

⁴“The variant reading may not be significant in some languages since use of a pronoun with ‘God’ may be required regardless of the original text. The pronoun ἡμῶν may be original but may have been omitted in some witnesses because it was felt to be inappropriate with the expression κύριος ὁ θεός ὁ παντοκράτωρ (the Lord the God Almighty). None of the other instances of the expression in Revelation has the possessive pronoun (1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7; 21:22). On the other hand, copyists may have added the pronoun after ὁ θεός under the influence of vv. 1 and 5, which refer to ‘our God.’ The pronoun is kept in the text because of good manuscript support, but it is put in brackets to indicate uncertainty regarding the original text.” [Roger L. Omanson and Bruce Manning Metzger, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament: An Adaptation of Bruce M. Metzger’s Textual Commentary for the Needs of Translators* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006), 547.]

⁵{C} δώσωμεν P 2062 2329 2344 Andrew // δώσομεν &² A 2053 &* 051 205 209 1006 1611 1841 1854 2030 Byz [046] it^{ar}, sig.¹ vg eth Cyprian Primasius (Beatus)

[Kurt Aland et al., *The Greek New Testament*, Fourth Revised Edition (with Apparatus); *The Greek New Testament*, 4th Revised Edition (with Apparatus) (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft; Stuttgart, 2000).]

⁶“The variant readings probably will have little or no significance for translation. If the present subjunctive δώμεν were original, it is difficult to account for the origin of the other readings. The future indicative tense δώσομεν has good manuscript support, but the future tense following two hortatory subjunctive verbs (χαίρωμεν [let us rejoice] and ἀγαλλιώμεν [let us be glad]) is irregular grammar and must be considered a mistake in copying. The irregular aorist subjunctive δώσωμεν is rare in manuscripts of the NT, but it is more satisfactory than the other readings.” [Roger L. Omanson and Bruce Manning Metzger, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament: An Adaptation of Bruce M. Metzger’s Textual Commentary for the Needs of Translators* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006), 547.]

context much better. .

Of course, more than just these three variations surface when the fuller picture of all the manuscripts is examined. The Text Apparatus of the Novum Testamentum Graece (N-A 28th rev ed) gives us that picture. Some 27 places are listed.⁷ But upon



examining each of these one notices that the majority are stylistic improvements intended to update the language to a more natural expression at the time of the copying. None have significant impact on the meaning of the passage.

Thus the adopted reading of the text can serve as the basis for exegeting the passage with confidence.

Internal History. Here the apocalyptic vision nature of the passage with the scenes taking place in heaven minimize any historical background significance to the passage.

Literary Aspects:

The series of five apocalyptic hymns of praise in the passage flag the importance of taking a close look at the literary aspects of the passage.

Genre: Clearly the apocalyptic vision nature of the text continues as signaled with ἤκουσα, *I heard*, introducing the passage in verse one, and then repeated in verse six. Both introduce the sound of a great multitude in heaven chanting their praise to God. Vv. 1-8 especially have often been labeled the great hymnic finale to the book of Revelation,⁸ although these seem more to stand as a transition from 17-18 to 21-22. Substantial parallels between 17-18 and 21-22 exist with both focusing on the destruction of evil and the blessing of the redeemed with the inauguration of the eternal order.

It is debated among more technical commentators

* και 046. 1854. 2030. (2344) M^K ar vg^{cl} sy (και is inserted before καθαρὸν)

9

* κ* 1841 M^A gig t bo (γάμου is omitted)
¹ κ (και before λέγει is omitted)
* οι Α μου κ* sy^{h**} (οι is inserted before ἀληθινοὶ)
* 1 4 2 3 κ* 051 M^A ar t; Prim (ἀληθινοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ εἰσιν is re-sequenced)
| 2 3 1 4 κ² 1006. 1841. 2329 vg^{cl}

10

* και προσεκυνησα P 2344 M^A sy^{ph} bo (προσκυνησαι.is replaced)
* ποιησης 1006. 1841 latt (ποιήσης is inserted after μή)
° κ* (σου is omitted)

[Eberhard Nestle and Erwin Nestle, *Nestle-Aland: NTG Apparatus Criticus*, ed. Barbara Aland et al., 28. revidierte Auflage. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012), 778–780.]

⁸“God has judged the harlot Babylon, and the crucial bastion of evil resistance on earth has therefore fallen. Now the call to rejoice, which had been expressed in 18:20, finds an overwhelming echo. Joyful praise of God’s victory commences in heaven and spreads among members of the salvation community on earth. Nowhere else in Revelation is there found such a conglomeration of hymnic pieces of music. In fact, there are no fewer than five hymns or elements of hymns, which have been combined here into an artistic composition.” [Jürgen Roloff, *A Continental Commentary: The Revelation of John* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 210.]

19,1

* και 051. 2344 M^A sy^{ph} bo (Και is added at the beginning of the sentence)

° 051*. 1006. 2053. 2062 M^A gig sy (ὡς is omitted)

°¹ 2344 M^A vgcl; Prim Apr Bea (μεγάλην is omitted)

* δυναμις κ* ar (δόξα και ἡ δύναμις is replace or re-sequenced)

| 4 2 3 1 046. 1854. 2030 M^K gig

| δοξα και η τιμη και η δυναμις 2329 (syh) bo

2

* διεφθειρεν 046. 051. 1854. 2030. 2329 M^K (ἔφθειρεν is replaced)

| εκρινεν A

* της 051. 2053. 2062. 2344 M^A (τῆς is added before χειρὸς)

3

* ειρηκεν 046. 1854. 2030. 2344 M^K sy^h bo (εἶρηκαν is replaced)

| ειπαν C

° 1611 M^A (αὐτῆς is omitted)

4

* του θρονου 051. 1611 M^A (τῷ θρόνῳ is replaced)

| των θρονων P

5

* φωνη εκ του θρονου εξηλθεν λεγουσα (–M^A) P 051 M^A (φωνη ἀπὸ τοῦ θρόνου ἐξῆλθεν λέγουσα is replaced)

| φωνη εξηλθεν εκ του θρονου λεγουσα κ²

| φωνη απο του ουρανου εξηλθεν λεγουσα 046; Prim

| φωναι εξηλθον εκ (απο 0229) του θρονου λεγουσαι κ*

0229

* τον θεον 1006. 1611. 1841. 1854. 2030. 2053. 2062 M (τῷ θεῷ is replaced)

| txt κ A C P 046. 051. 0229. 2329. 2344 latt

° κ C P sa bo^{ms} (και is omitted)

| txt A 046. 051. 0229. 1006. 1611. 1841. 1854. 2030.

2053. 2062. 2329. 2344 M latt sy bo

6

° 1006 M^A gig; Prim (ὡς is omitted)

* λεγοντας 051 M^A (λεγόντων is replaced)

| λεγοντες 046. 1854. 2030 M^K

| λεγουσων κ

| txt A P 0229. 1006. 1611. 1841. 2053. 2062. 2329 latt

* 1–3 A 1006. 1841 t sa^{ms} sy; Cyp (κύριος ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν is resequenced or replaced)

| 2–4 051 M^A

| ο θεος ο κυριος ημων κ*

| txt κ² P 046. 1611. 1854. 2030. 2053. 2062. 2329. 2344

M^K latt sy^h sa^{ms}

7

* αγαλλιωμεθα 046. 2030 M^K (ἀγαλλιῶμεν is replaced)

* δωσομεν κ² A 2053 (δώσωμεν is replaced)

| δωμεν κ* 046. 051. 1006. 1611. 1841. 1854. 2030 M^K

| txt P 2062. 2329 M^A

*¹ νυμφη κ² gig co; Apr (γυνή is replaced)

8

as to whether these five hymnic pieces reflect Christian worship hymn sources⁹ or John's own composition to fit the context here.¹⁰ The adaptation to precisely fit this context in Revelation argues for the latter understanding rather strongly. Clearly they collectively form a fitting climax to God's triumph over evil on earth.¹¹ What seems to be standing in the background here is John's Jewish heritage of the so-called hallel psalms (113-118) because these celebrate the beginning of the exodus and later on were used in celebration of the final destruction of the wicked.¹² Out of this heritage came

⁹“These hymnic pieces no doubt correspond largely in form and style to the psalms and hymns that the Asia Minor churches sang in their worship. Nevertheless, it is even less doubtful here than elsewhere among the hymnic pieces in Revelation that John composed them himself and did not take them from the church's worship. For references to what has already taken place are found in great concentration here, especially to statements and motifs of the second section of visions beginning with 12:1, which finds its grandiose conclusion here. We are dealing here with a hymnic finale in which the event heretofore is again bound together and is conducted to a final climax. The hymn of praise does not have the final word of the section, of course, but rather the view toward the situation of the contemporary churches. In a surprising concluding shift (vv. 9–10*), they are led to understand correctly what they have heard, or rather what they have read: it is to be nothing other than help and challenge to faithful steadfastness of the testimony of Jesus.” [Jürgen Roloff, *A Continental Commentary: The Revelation of John* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 210.]

¹⁰“Rev 19:1–10 does not reflect liturgical hymns or hymnic pieces used in churches but was expressly composed to fit its present literary context, even though some elements may have been drawn from Jewish and Christian liturgical tradition (Deichgräber, *Gotteshymnus*, 58). Vv 1–4 focus on anticipatory celebration of the judgment of the great whore proleptically narrated in 18:1–24, while vv 5–8 anticipate the marriage of the Lamb and the readiness of his bride, metaphors for the descent of the New Jerusalem to earth in 21:9–22:9. Among the distinctive features of this hymnic section is the occurrence of the transliterated Hebrew liturgical formula “hallelujah” four times (vv 1, 3, 4, 6).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1022.]

¹¹“These hallelujahs are ecstatic exclamations of praise befitting the arrival of the eschatological salvation. They are distinct from the general praise and thanksgiving given for God's goodness, manifested daily in food, drink, and health. Rather, they are sung in response to the admonition of 18:20. Heaven is to rejoice over the destruction of the whore Babylon, intoxicated with abominations (17:5–6). The eschatological jubilation begins in heaven (19:1–4) and is joined on earth by “all” of God's servants (19:5–8). It forms a fitting counterpart to the self-centered laments of the kings, merchants, and sailors (18:9–19).” [Gerhard A. Krodel, *Revelation*, *Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1989), 310.]

¹²“Johnson suggests that the threefold ‘hallelujah’ in vv 1–6 alludes to the hallel psalms (Psalms 113–118, esp. 113:1 and 115:13) because of the prominent reference in those psalms to the exodus (cf. also b. Pesahim 117a) and because Jewish writings associated the hallel Psalms with the final destruction of the wicked (Midr. Rab. Lev. 30.5; cf. Pesikta Rabbati 2.1).²⁷² Even more likely is the possibility of allusion to Ps. 104:35, where ‘hallelujah’ is

some of the language found in these hymnic pieces in chapter 19, e.g, the three times repeated ἀλληλουϊά, *Hallelujah!*” as the very first word of each expression.

Literary Setting: The literary context for 19:1-10 is easy to determine. This passage brings to a climatic high point the texts beginning especially with the sixth bowl of wrath in 16:12. Chapters seventeen and eighteen have particularly centered on the downfall of Babylon. In chapter eighteen, both the divine pronouncement of doom and the faked mourning over her downfall by evil people are presented. Standing in dramatic contrast to these evil people are the saints of God in heaven along with other heavenly creatures who celebrate the triumph of a holy God over the evil Babylon.

But this climatic celebration only anticipates the coming doom of Babylon. To be certain, as with other similar heavenly celebrations already in Revelation, celebrations can and do occur in advance of the event itself. This because when God decides to take action if can be celebrated as already accomplished even though it may be centuries before the event takes place. Apocalyptic thinking is not concerned with chronology; only with the intention of God to act in the world.

This celebration in heaven serves to set up the final sequence of events beginning in 19:11 and extending through chapter 20. Central to this is the appearance of Christ on the white horse of victory (vv. 11-16) who destroys Babylon. The setting up of τὸ δεῖπνον τὸ μέγα τοῦ θεοῦ, *the great banquet of God*, in vv. 17-21 comes upon the destruction of the kings of the earth and the beast.¹³ This is followed with the beginning of final judgment in 20:1-6 and the final destruction of Satan himself (20:7-10). This final judgment is then completed in 20:11-15 with the eternal damnation of the evil people of the world. But this ushers in the eternal order which will center on various depictions of heaven in chapters 21-22 as the eternal home of God's people.

Literary Structure: The block diagram below proclaimed at the conclusion of the Psalm because of God's judgment of sinners: ‘Let sinners be consumed from the earth, and let the wicked be no more.... Hallelujah!’ (cf. Ps. 58:10–11).²⁷³ Ps. 104:35 was understood as referring to the final judgment of sinners (b. Berakoth 9b; 10a; ARN 31b; Midr. Rab. Lev. 4.7; Midr. Pss. 92.10; 103.3; 104.27; Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer 18).” [G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, *New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 926–927.]

¹³To be sure the angelic invitation delivered to the people of God to this banquet of celebration is somewhat challenging, “Come, gather for the great supper of God, to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of the mighty, the flesh of horses and their riders — flesh of all, both free and slave, both small and great” (vv. 17b-18).

helps present the structural arrangement of vv. 1-10 visually. This facilitates easier grasping of how the ideas

19.1 After these things
518 **I heard**
as a loud voice
of a large crowd
in heaven
of those saying:

A "Hallelujah!
B the salvation
and
the glory
and
the power to our God,
/-----|
19.2 because genuine and righteous are His judgments;
because He judged the great whore
| who corrupted the earth
| with her immorality,
| καὶ
He has avenged the blood of His servants
out from her hand."

19.3 And
a second time
519 **they said,**
C "Hallelujah!
and
D Her smoke rises up
forever and ever."

19.4 And
520 **fell down the 24 elders**
καὶ
521 **the four living creatures also worshipped God**
| who was sitting
| upon the throne
saying,
E "Amen, hallelujah!"

19.5 And
522 **a voice from the throne came out**
saying,
F "Praise to our God
all His servants
even
those who fear Him,
the small and the great."

19.6 And
523 **I heard**
as a voice of a large crowd
and
as a sound of many waters
and
as a sound of powerful thunder peals
saying,
G "Hallelujah!,

because our Lord God reigns
the Almighty.

H ^{19.7} **Let us be rejoicing**
and
I **let us be glad**
and
J **let us give glory to Him,**
because has come the marriage of the Lamb
and
K His bride has prepared herself
^{19.8}
and
L **has been given to her** _
/-----|
that she should be clothed fine linen bright and clean;"

for
524 **the fine linen are the righteous deeds of the saints.**

^{19.9} And
525 **he says to me,**
M **"Write;**
to the banquet
of the supper
of the bride
of the Lamb
a **Blessed are those...invited."**

and
526 **he says to me,**
N **These words are genuinely from God.**

^{19.10} and
527 **I fell down**
at his feet
to worship him.

And
528 **he says to me,**
O **Don't do that,**
P **your fellow servant I am**
and
one of your brothers
who has the testimony of Jesus;
G **worship God.**

For
H **the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit giving prophecy.**

Analysis of Rhetorical Structure

One obvious division is between the celebration in statements 518 - 524 and the instructions to John to write in #s 525-528. But inside each of these two basic divisions are subunits of material.

In the celebration section the numbered statements reflect the various individuals in heaven participation in the celebration: #s 518-519, the large crowd; #s 520-521 the 24 elders and the 4 living creatures; # 522, voice from the throne; #s 523-524, the large

crowd.

In the instructions to write two units emerge: the angelic command to write, #s 525-526 and the correction of John's attempt to worship the angel, #s 527-528. These two subunits provide helpful insight into how John interacted with angels while in his apocalyptic visits to heaven. They contain valuable lessons for us on earth.

Exegesis of the Text:

The above diagram provides the basis for dividing up the text into units formed by the text itself, as opposed to imposing external outlines down on to the passage. First comes the heavenly celebration of the impending downfall of Babylon (vv. 1-8) and then the angelic instructions given to John (vv. 9-10).

A. The heavenly celebration, vv. 1-8

19.1 Μετὰ ταῦτα ἤκουσα ὡς φωνὴν μεγάλην ὄχλου πολλοῦ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ λεγόντων· ἀλληλουϊά· ἡ σωτηρία καὶ ἡ δόξα καὶ ἡ δύναμις τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν, 2 ὅτι ἀληθινὰ καὶ δίκαιαι αἱ κρίσεις αὐτοῦ· ὅτι ἔκρινεν τὴν πόρνην τὴν μεγάλην ἣτις ἔφθειρεν τὴν γῆν ἐν τῇ πορνείᾳ αὐτῆς, καὶ ἐξεδίκησεν τὸ αἷμα τῶν δούλων αὐτοῦ ἐκ χειρὸς αὐτῆς. 3 Καὶ δεύτερον εἶρηκαν· ἀλληλουϊά· καὶ ὁ καπνὸς αὐτῆς ἀναβαίνει εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων. 4 καὶ ἔπεσαν οἱ πρεσβύτεροι οἱ εἴκοσι τέσσαρες καὶ τὰ τέσσαρα ζῶα καὶ προσεκύνησαν τῷ θεῷ τῷ καθημένῳ ἐπὶ τῷ θρόνῳ λέγοντες· ἀμήν ἀλληλουϊά. 5 Καὶ φωνὴ ἀπὸ τοῦ θρόνου ἐξῆλθεν λέγουσα· αἰνεῖτε τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν πάντες οἱ δοῦλοι αὐτοῦ [καὶ] οἱ φοβούμενοι αὐτόν, οἱ μικροὶ καὶ οἱ μεγάλοι. 6 Καὶ ἤκουσα ὡς φωνὴν ὄχλου πολλοῦ καὶ ὡς φωνὴν ὑδάτων πολλῶν καὶ ὡς φωνὴν βροντῶν ἰσχυρῶν λεγόντων· ἀλληλουϊά, ὅτι ἐβασίλευσεν κύριος ὁ θεὸς [ἡμῶν] ὁ παντοκράτωρ. 7 χαίρωμεν καὶ ἀγαλλιῶμεν καὶ δώσωμεν τὴν δόξαν αὐτῷ, ὅτι ἦλθεν ὁ γάμος τοῦ ἀρνίου * καὶ ἡ γυνὴ αὐτοῦ ἠτοίμασεν ἑαυτὴν 8 καὶ ἐδόθη αὐτῇ ἵνα περιβάληται βύσσινον λαμπρὸν καθαρὸν· τὸ γὰρ βύσσινον τὰ δικαιώματα τῶν ἁγίων ἐστίν.

19.1 After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power to our God, 2 for his judgments are true and just; he has judged the great whore who corrupted the earth with her fornication, and he has avenged on her the blood of his servants.” 3 Once more they said, “Hallelujah! The smoke goes up from her forever and ever.” 4 And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who is seated on the throne, saying, “Amen. Hallelujah!” 5 And from the throne came a voice saying, “Praise our God, all you his servants, and all who fear him, small and great.” 6 Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunder peals, crying out, “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. 7 Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready; 8 to her it has been granted to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure” — for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

In the celebration that takes place everyone in

heaven participates:

- 1) The great crowd of saints, vv. 1-3
- 2) The 24 elders and 4 creatures, v. 4
- 3) The voice from the throne, v. 5
- 4) The great crowd of saints, vv. 6-8

Also important to note is what they celebrate. Although everything is geared around the downfall of evil Babylon as portrayed in chap. 18, what heaven celebrates is the vindication of the holiness and power of God in triumphing over evil Babylon. He crushes her and in so doing gains the vengeance for the blood of His people killed by her. The Μετὰ ταῦτα, *After these things*, in 19:1 signals the next stage in the apocalyptic vision where God’s people now can celebrate her impending and certain downfall. Her destruction is celebrated in advance of the actual event which is presented in 19:11-16, but even here indirectly rather than directly. What is significant is her destruction rather than when it happens.

Not only is the triumph of God over evil Babylon celebrated primarily in vv. 1-4, but in vv. 5-8 the impending wedding celebration of the Lamb is the central focus. But these are closely connected events almost to the point of being the same event.

1) The great crowd of saints, vv. 1-3. This group’s celebration is presented in two parts, vv. 1-2 and v. 3.

VV. 1-2. 1 Μετὰ ταῦτα ἤκουσα ὡς φωνὴν μεγάλην ὄχλου πολλοῦ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ λεγόντων· ἀλληλουϊά· ἡ σωτηρία καὶ ἡ δόξα καὶ ἡ δύναμις τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν, 2 ὅτι ἀληθινὰ καὶ δίκαιαι αἱ κρίσεις αὐτοῦ· ὅτι ἔκρινεν τὴν πόρνην τὴν μεγάλην ἣτις ἔφθειρεν τὴν γῆν ἐν τῇ πορνείᾳ αὐτῆς, καὶ ἐξεδίκησεν τὸ αἷμα τῶν δούλων αὐτοῦ ἐκ χειρὸς αὐτῆς. 1 After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power to our God, 2 for his judgments are true and just; he has judged the great whore who corrupted the earth with her fornication, and he has avenged on her the blood of his servants.”

In literary form, this is a ‘judgment doxology,’ that has surfaced twice before in Revelation at 16:5-6 and 16:7.¹⁴ The cry of victory begins with ἀλληλουϊά, *Hallelujah!* and then declares ἡ σωτηρία καὶ ἡ δόξα καὶ ἡ

¹⁴Rev. 16:5-7. 5 Καὶ ἤκουσα τοῦ ἀγγέλου τῶν ὑδάτων λέγοντος· δίκαιος εἶ, ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν, ὁ ὄσιος, ὅτι ταῦτα ἔκρινας, 6 ὅτι αἷμα ἁγίων καὶ προφητῶν ἐξέχεαν καὶ αἷμα αὐτοῖς [δ]έδωκας πιεῖν, ἅξιόι εἰσιν.

7 Καὶ ἤκουσα τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου λέγοντος· ναὶ κύριε ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ, ἀληθινὰ καὶ δίκαιαι αἱ κρίσεις σου.

5 And I heard the angel of the waters say, “You are just, O Holy One, who are and were, for you have judged these things; 6 because they shed the blood of saints and prophets, you have given them blood to drink. It is what they deserve!”

7 And I heard the altar respond, “Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, your judgments are true and just!”

δύναμις τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν, *Salvation and glory and power be to our God!* It is followed by the twofold reason (ὅτι) for celebration, ὅτι ἀληθινὰ καὶ δίκαιαι αἱ κρίσεις αὐτοῦ· ὅτι ἔκρινεν τὴν πόρνην τὴν μεγάλην ἣτις ἔφθειρεν τὴν γῆν ἐν τῇ πορνείᾳ αὐτῆς, καὶ ἐξεδίκησεν τὸ αἷμα τῶν δούλων αὐτοῦ ἐκ χειρὸς αὐτῆς, *for his judgments are true and just; he has judged the great whore who corrupted the earth with her fornication, and he has avenged on her the blood of his servants.*” One should note that no verb is present in the core statement or in the first causal statement. Oral Greek could easily omit the verb when clearly implied by the structuring of the phrase.

This is very similar to 7:10; 11:15, and especially 12:10 in affirming the triumphant power of God over evil.¹⁵ In crushing evil totally, God remains true to His holy character and rendering of judgments. Additionally the dual theme of blessing to His saints and the destruction of their enemies from the seventh trumpet (11:15-19) is picked up again here and enlarged.

Attributed to God’s victory are ἡ σωτηρία καὶ ἡ δόξα καὶ ἡ δύναμις, *Salvation and glory and power*. In 7:10; 12:10; and 19:1 σωτηρία uniformly declares the deliverance by God of His people from Babylon, the epitome of evil on earth. In 7:10 this deliverance is jointly achieved by God and the Lamb. A similar emphasis surfaces in 12:10. The second item ἡ δόξα is somewhat more challenging to define. The Greek word is used some 17 times in Revelation, and vacillates in meaning between praise being given to God and glory as a fundamental aspect of His overpowering presence. The first meaning is clear when ἡ δόξα is something being expressed by others to God. As the chart on the right indicates, numerous words inside the NT are translated with the English word ‘praise.’ The distinctive nuance of meaning in both the verb δοξάζω and the noun δόξα is a

¹⁵**Rev. 7:10.** καὶ κράζουσιν φωνῇ μεγάλῃ λέγοντες· ἡ σωτηρία τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν τῷ καθημένῳ ἐπὶ τῷ θρόνῳ καὶ τῷ ἀρνίῳ.

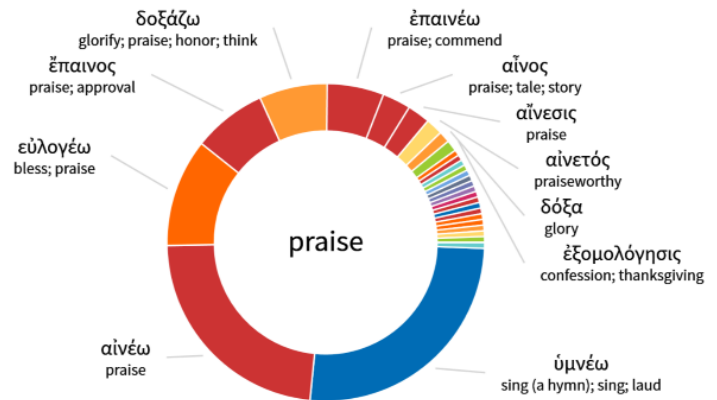
They cried out in a loud voice, saying, “Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!”

Rev. 11:15. Καὶ ὁ ἕβδομος ἄγγελος ἐσάλπισεν· καὶ ἐγένοντο φωναὶ μεγάλαι ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ λέγοντες· ἐγένετο ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ κόσμου τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν καὶ τοῦ χριστοῦ αὐτοῦ, καὶ βασιλεύσει εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰῶνων.

Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign forever and ever.”

Rev. 12:10. καὶ ἤκουσα φωνὴν μεγάλην ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ λέγουσαν· ἄρτι ἐγένετο ἡ σωτηρία καὶ ἡ δύναμις καὶ ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ ἡ ἐξουσία τοῦ χριστοῦ αὐτοῦ, ὅτι ἐβλήθη ὁ κατήγωρ τῶν ἀδελφῶν ἡμῶν, ὁ κατηγορῶν αὐτοὺς ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτός.

Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, proclaiming, “Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Messiah, for the accuser of our comrades has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.”



praise that amplifies and makes clear the overpowering greatness of God’s presence. Thus the heavenly crowd of saints celebrate in words how overpowering God’s presence up against evil. It is that divine presence that produces the σωτηρία of His people. This leads to the third affirmation: ἡ δύναμις, *power*. This word ἡ δύναμις is used some 32 times in Revelation both in reference to God and also in reference to Christ as the Lamb. Behind the deliverance through the overpowering presence of God lies His mighty power. This third item is a natural point of celebration.

The significance of this core declaration without a stated verb, ἡ σωτηρία καὶ ἡ δόξα καὶ ἡ δύναμις τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν, is a call for all to acknowledge these traits of our God. The celebration in no way ‘gives power’ to God; instead the focus is upon the audience of the voice of the large crowd. All of creation including heaven and earth are called upon to acknowledge God as possessing these qualities that are being used in behalf of His people. Thus the response of the 24 elders and 4 living creatures in heaven is just that (v. 4) as they declare, ἀμήν ἀλληλουϊά, *Amen! Hallelujah!*

The twin statement of reason begins with God’s holiness: ὅτι ἀληθινὰ καὶ δίκαιαι αἱ κρίσεις αὐτοῦ, because genuine and just are His judgments. The foundation of God’s ἡ σωτηρία καὶ ἡ δόξα καὶ ἡ δύναμις is ἀληθινὰ καὶ δίκαιαι αἱ κρίσεις αὐτοῦ, *His judgments genuine and just*. These two attributes of ἀληθινὰ καὶ δίκαιαι flow out of His very being and thus αἱ κρίσεις αὐτοῦ, *His judgments*, reflect who God is. In the background here stand numerous affirmations of God as Truth and Justice: 3:7, 14; 6:10; 15:3; 16:5, 7 (ναὶ κύριε ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ, ἀληθινὰ καὶ δίκαιαι αἱ κρίσεις σου. *Yes Lord God the Almighty, true and just are your judgments!*).

Out of this acknowledgment of God’s judgments then come His crushing judgment upon Babylon the very essence of evil and corruption on the earth: ὅτι ἔκρινεν τὴν πόρνην τὴν μεγάλην ἣτις ἔφθειρεν τὴν γῆν ἐν τῇ πορνείᾳ αὐτῆς, καὶ ἐξεδίκησεν τὸ αἷμα τῶν δούλων αὐτοῦ ἐκ χειρὸς αὐτῆς. *He has judged the great whore who corrupted the earth with her fornication, and He has avenged on her the blood of his servants.* This second ὅτι clause

provides the additional foundation for the acknowledgment of God's salvation, glory, and power. Its close connection to the first ὅτι clause underscores an important point. The qualities of God's character and judgments are not static but dynamic. A holy God cannot and will not tolerate evil unendingly. At some point in His own determination evil will be totally crushed in His overwhelming judgment.

Babylon receives this crushing blow due to two things here. First she has polluted the entire earth with her evil corruption: ἔκρινεν τὴν πόρνην τὴν μεγάλην ἣτις ἔφθειρεν τὴν γῆν ἐν τῇ πορνείᾳ αὐτῆς, *He judged the great whore who corrupted the earth with her immorality*. This evil character of Babylon has been well established in chapters seventeen and eighteen; cf. esp. 17:1-5; 18:3, 7-9. But the anticipation of this crushing judgment of Babylon began early in Revelation at 11:18. This prediction uses the language of Jer. 51:25 (LXX 28:25) to pronounce the wrath of God upon Babylon.¹⁶

Second, she has harmed God's people: καὶ ἐξεδίκησεν τὸ αἷμα τῶν δούλων αὐτοῦ ἐκ χειρὸς αὐτῆς, *and He has avenged the blood of His servants by her hand*. The core idea ἐκδικέω in its limited NT usage (6x; 2x Rev) is to 'dish out justice' for some crime. In the background here stands the language of 6:10, ἔως πότε, ὁ δεσπότης ὁ ἅγιος καὶ ἀληθινός, οὐ κρίνεις καὶ ἐκδικεῖς τὸ αἷμα ἡμῶν ἐκ τῶν κατοικούντων ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς; *"Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long will it be before you judge and avenge our blood on the inhabitants of the earth?"*

In the background stands the very similar phrase from 2 Kings 9:7, καὶ ἐκδικήσεις τὰ αἵματα τῶν δούλων μου τῶν προφητῶν καὶ τὰ αἵματα πάντων τῶν δούλων κυρίου ἐκ χειρὸς Ἰεζάβελ, *And you will avenge the deaths of my servants the prophets and the deaths of all the servants of the Lord at the hand of Jezebel*. The parallel phrase ἐκ χειρὸς Ἰεζάβελ, at Jezebel's hand, is picked up by John with ἐκ χειρὸς αὐτῆς, *at her hand*, i.e., Babylon's. As Jezebel corrupted God's people in the northern kingdom, so Babylon corrupts the people of the earth.

The τὸ αἷμα τῶν δούλων αὐτοῦ, *blood of His servants*,

¹⁶Jer. 51:24-26. (LXX 28:24-26) 24 καὶ ἀνταποδώσω τῇ Βαβυλῶνι καὶ πᾶσι τοῖς κατοικοῦσι Χαλδαίοις πάσας τὰς κακίας αὐτῶν, ἃς ἐποίησαν ἐπὶ Σιών κατ' ὀφθαλμοὺς ὑμῶν, λέγει κύριος. † 25 ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ πρὸς σέ, τὸ ὄρος τὸ διεφθαρμένον τὸ διαφθειρόν πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν, καὶ ἐκτενῶ τὴν χεῖρά μου ἐπὶ σέ καὶ κατακυλιῶ σε ἀπὸ τῶν πετρῶν καὶ δώσω σε ὡς ὄρος ἐμπετυρισμένον, † 26 καὶ οὐ μὴ λάβωσιν ἀπὸ σοῦ λίθον εἰς γωνίαν καὶ λίθον εἰς θεμέλιον, ὅτι εἰς ἀφανισμόν εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα ἔσθι, λέγει κύριος. †

24 I will repay Babylon and all the inhabitants of Chaldea before your very eyes for all the wrong that they have done in Zion, says the Lord. 25 I am against you, O destroying mountain, says the Lord, that destroys the whole earth; I will stretch out my hand against you, and roll you down from the crags, and make you a burned-out mountain. 26 No stone shall be taken from you for a corner and no stone for a foundation, but you shall be a perpetual waste, says the Lord.

recalls 18:24, αἷμα προφητῶν καὶ ἁγίων, *the blood of prophets and saints*. God's promise to avenge the harm done to His people goes back to Deut. 32:43, ὅτι τὸ αἷμα τῶν υἱῶν αὐτοῦ ἐκδικᾶται, καὶ ἐκδικήσει καὶ ἀνταποδώσει δίκην τοῖς ἐχθροῖς, *because the blood of His children will be avenged, and He will avenge and pay back justice to His enemies*. Thus the full extent of God's justice will be inflicted on Babylon for how she abused God's people.

V. 3. 3 Καὶ δεύτερον εἶρηκαν· ἀλληλουϊά· καὶ ὁ καπνὸς αὐτῆς ἀναβαίνει εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων. 3 *Once more they said, "Hallelujah! The smoke goes up from her forever and ever."*

This short unit offers a second word of praise to God for the destruction of Babylon. The first question is why is this set up as an independent unit¹⁷ rather than being appended to the first, since the declaration comes from the same source. A few isolated commentators have taken this to refer to a different group than the first group in v. 1. But contextually this is impossible. The third plural verb ending of εἶρηκαν can only refer back to φωνὴν μεγάλην ὄχλου πολλοῦ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, *a loud voice of a large crowd in heaven* (v. 1). The adverb δεύτερον means clearly that this group spoke a second time after the first. The only natural explanation is that the narrative intro Καὶ δεύτερον εἶρηκαν functions to raise emphasis upon this second declaration rather than allowing it to 'get lost' in the set of declarations in the first speaking of vv. 1-2.

Clearly the repetition of ἀλληλουϊά as the first word of both declarations link the two together. But does that mean that the second ἀλληλουϊά introduces the conclusion while the first ἀλληλουϊά (v. 1b) introduces the beginning? Conceptually rather than grammatically this is probably the case.

The hallel psalms of 113-118 primarily, that begin and sometimes conclude with ἀλληλουϊά (הַלְלוּ־יְהוָה), most likely stand behind this heavenly declaration providing a pattern. Note also the similar thrust in Psalm 104:35 (LXX 103:35) primarily in the Hebrew, which in Jewish interpretive history was viewed as end time judgment on non-Jews:

יְחַרְבֵּן מְנַחֵם יְמֵי

עֲוֵי וְיִשְׁרֵי

הַיָּרֵחַ הַלְלוּ־יְהוָה

ἐκλίποισαν ἁμαρτωλοὶ ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς
καὶ ἄνομοι ὥστε μὴ ὑπάρχειν αὐτούς.
εὐλόγει, ἡ ψυχὴ μου, τὸν κύριον. †

Let sinners be consumed from the earth,
and let the wicked be no more.

Bless the Lord, O my soul. Praise the Lord!¹⁸

¹⁷The narrative intro Καὶ δεύτερον εἶρηκαν· sets this up as a separate unit.

¹⁸Johnson suggests that the threefold 'hallelujah' in vv 1-6 alludes to the hallel psalms (Psalms 113-118, esp. 113:1 and 115:13)

forms the heavenly choir of praise and these 24 elders and 4 creatures function as the congregation responding in affirmation to the declarations of the choir.

3) The voice from the throne, v. 5. Again both a narrative intro and a direct discourse verbal expression are given.

Καὶ φωνὴ ἀπὸ τοῦ θρόνου ἐξῆλθεν λέγουσα·
And from the throne came a voice saying,

Although the image of a voice coming from the heavenly throne is common, the distinct pattern ἀπὸ τοῦ θρόνου, **from the throne**, is found only here and in 16:17,²³ while ἐκ τοῦ θρόνου, **out of the throne**, is found in 21:3. Also coming ἐκ τοῦ θρόνου are ἐκπορεύονται ἀστραπαὶ καὶ φωναὶ καὶ βρονταί, **coming out are flashes of lightening and rumblings and peals of thunder** (4:5); and μοι ποταμὸν ὕδατος ζωῆς λαμπρὸν ὡς κρύσταλλον, ἐκπορευόμενον **ἐκ τοῦ θρόνου τοῦ θεοῦ** καὶ τοῦ ἀρνίου, **the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb** (22:1). Although the two Greek prepositions differ slightly in meaning, the two phrases ἀπὸ τοῦ θρόνου and ἐκ τοῦ θρόνου seem to be virtually the same in meaning.

The voice is unidentified specifically. The narrative intro would lead to the conclusion that it is the voice of God, but the direct discourse spoken by the voice suggests someone other than God speaking.²⁴ Thus we are left in suspense as to the specific identity of the voice.

αἰνεῖτε τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν

Praise our God

πάντες οἱ δοῦλοι αὐτοῦ

all His servants

[καὶ] οἱ φοβούμενοι αὐτόν,

and those fearing Him

οἱ μικροὶ καὶ οἱ μεγάλοι.

Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1027.]

²³Very close is 16:17 καὶ ἐξῆλθεν φωνὴ μεγάλη ἐκ τοῦ ναοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ θρόνου λέγουσα· **And came out a loud voice out of the temple from the throne saying.**

²⁴“On the motif of the unidentified heavenly voice, see Comment on 10:4. Though one might assume that a voice ‘from the throne’ would be the voice of God (but cf. 5:6), the brief speech that follows in vv 3b–4 with the phrase αἰνεῖτε τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν, ‘praise our God,’ seems to exclude that possibility since it refers to God in the third person. In Exod 25:22, God promises to speak to Moses from the mercy seat between the two cherubim on the ark (see Philo Quaest. in Ex. 2.68; Fug. 101; Quis Her. 166). Some commentators attribute this voice to one of the four cherubim or one of the twenty-four elders (Beckwith, 721; Charles, 2:124; Mounce, 338), while others attribute it to Christ, the Lamb (Bousset, 427), even though the phrase ‘my God’ would be more appropriate than ‘our God’ in this case. Kraft suggests that the speaker is ‘the angel of the throne’ (243). Since there can be no satisfactory answer to this question, it is perhaps better to conclude simply that the phrase ‘from the throne’ at the very least indicates the divine authorization of the speaker.” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1027.]

The small and the great.

The core admonition is simply αἰνεῖτε τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν, **Praise God**, while every thing else is vocative case specifications of whom the admonition goes to. In the background here stands Psalm 148 in which vv. 1-6 references those in the heavens while vv. 7-14 those on earth. The admonition is OT in formulation and is roughly the equivalent of ἄλληλουῖα from the Hebrew הללויה.²⁵

With the vocative case forms, it is clear that the heavenly voice turns to His people on earth and admonishes them to join in the heavenly celebration over the fall of Babylon. He references them two basic ways. First they are called πάντες οἱ δοῦλοι αὐτοῦ, **all His servants**. The term οἱ δοῦλοι αὐτοῦ, His servants, repeatedly is used to reference believers on earth in Revelation: 1:1; 2:20; 7:3; 11:18; 22:3, 6.

And who are οἱ δοῦλοι αὐτοῦ, **His servants**? They are next defined as οἱ φοβούμενοι αὐτόν, **those fearing Him**.²⁶As a designation of believers in Revelation see also 11:18; 14:7; 15:4. For a depiction of what it means to genuinely fear God see 1:17 where fright caused John to faint in the presence of God. At the heart of φοβέω in reference to God as the object of the fear, the core idea is one of profound reverence for the overpowering presence and might of God. The actions of the 24 elders and 4 creatures in v. 4 illustrate this concept.

The twin modifying adjectives that follow οἱ μικροὶ καὶ οἱ μεγάλοι, the small and the great, define opposite ends of the socio-economic ladder in the ancient world. When placed together like here they specify absolutely

²⁵“The phrase αἰνεῖτε τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν, ‘praise our God,’ is very close to the OT formula הללויה halēlū-’el, ‘praise God’ (Ps 150:1), translated αἰνεῖτε τὸν θεόν in the LXX. Very similar is the formula הודו להיה hōdū laYHWH, ‘praise Yahweh’ (Pss 33:2; 105:1; 106:1; 107:1; 1 Chr 16:34; Isa 12:4; see Jörns, *Evangelium*, 152). The phrase הללויה halēlū ’et-YHWH, ‘praise Yahweh,’ in Ps 117:1 (LXX 116:1: αἰνεῖτε τὸν κύριον, ‘praise the Lord’) suggests that αἰνεῖτε τῷ θεῷ is a relatively close way of rendering ‘hallelujah.’ The phrase הללויה halēlū lē’lōhēnū represents a literal retroversion of αἰνεῖτε τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν into Hebrew (Charles, 2:124; Lohmeyer, 154), though this expression is nowhere found in the Hebrew Bible. αἰνεῖν, which occurs only here in Revelation, is part of a rich liturgical vocabulary of thanks and praise (on the words in these two semantic domains, see Louw-Nida, §§ 33.349–64) inherited by early Christianity from Judaism and the Greco-Roman world (on αἰνεῖν, see TDNT 1:177–78; on הללויה hōdā, see TDOT 3:352–56; on translating הללויה hōdā as ‘to praise,’ rather than ‘to thank,’ see Westermann, *Praise*, 26–27).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1028.]

²⁶The placing of [καὶ] in brackets reflects textual uncertainty as to its being original or not. The ascensive function of καὶ in a context such as this simply intensifies the defining quality of οἱ φοβούμενοι αὐτόν of the preceding οἱ δοῦλοι αὐτοῦ. Its absence doesn’t change any meaning; it just reduces the intensity of the defining role of οἱ φοβούμενοι αὐτόν in an **epexegetical** role.

all of God's people whether a slave or an aristocrat. For additionally uses of this twin combination see 11:18; 13:16; 19:18; 20:12. No believer on earth is omitted from the admonition to praise God for His judgments on Babylon.

4) **The great crowd of saints, vv. 6-8.** A great voice is again heard by John. Again the standard narrative intro is followed by the verbal declaration of praise. But this time an interpretive statement is added by John at the very end of the praise.

Και ἤκουσα ὡς φωνὴν ὄχλου πολλοῦ καὶ ὡς φωνὴν ὑδάτων πολλῶν καὶ ὡς φωνὴν βροντῶν ἰσχυρῶν λεγόντων· Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunder peals, crying out,

One of the interpretive issues is whether this 'voice' is the same one in v. 1 or whether a different one.²⁷ Although the depiction of the two voices is somewhat different, they seem to come from the same source: ὄχλου πολλοῦ, *of a large crowd*. Why then does John describe them differently? Or, does he? In verse one, the sound is ὡς φωνὴν μεγάλην, *what seemed to be a loud voice*. But in verse six, it is καὶ ὡς φωνὴν ὑδάτων πολλῶν καὶ ὡς φωνὴν βροντῶν ἰσχυρῶν, *and as sound from many waters and as sound from mighty thunder peals*. These two additional qualifiers together equal the φωνὴν μεγάλην, *loud voice*, in verse one.²⁸

These metaphors for loudness are relatively common in Revelation. ὡς φωνὴν ὑδάτων πολλῶν, *like sound from many waters*: 1:15; 14:2 taken from Isa. 17:12 and Ezek. 1:24. ὡς φωνὴν βροντῶν ἰσχυρῶν, *like sound from peals of mighty thunder*: 6:1; 14:2 and found also in Apocalypse of Baruch (= 3 Baruch) 11:3; 14:1-2. In 14:2 they are found together.

ἀλληλουϊά,

ὅτι ἐβασίλευσεν κύριος ὁ θεὸς [ἡμῶν] ὁ παντοκράτωρ. χαίρωμεν καὶ ἀγαλλιῶμεν καὶ δώσωμεν τὴν δόξαν αὐτῷ, ὅτι ἦλθεν ὁ γάμος τοῦ ἀρνίου καὶ ἡ γυνὴ αὐτοῦ ἠτοιμάσεν ἑαυτὴν καὶ ἐδόθη αὐτῇ ἵνα περιβάληται βύσσινον λαμπρὸν καθαρόν·

“Hallelujah!

For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready; to her it has been granted to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure”—

Their praise to God follows the standard structure

²⁷A third view sees this directed to God's people on earth, as a response to the heavenly voice summons to praise in v. 5.

²⁸v. 1: ὡς φωνὴν μεγάλην ὄχλου πολλοῦ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ

v. 6: ὡς φωνὴν ὄχλου πολλοῦ καὶ ὡς φωνὴν ὑδάτων πολλῶν καὶ ὡς φωνὴν βροντῶν ἰσχυρῶν

Both are introduced by John's standard ἤκουσα, I heard.

of an admonition to praise with a justifying reason (ὅτι clause). The distinctive of this second praise in vv. 6b-8a is the doublet expression of v. 6b and vv. 7-8a.

First comes ἀλληλουϊά, ὅτι ἐβασίλευσεν κύριος ὁ θεὸς [ἡμῶν] ὁ παντοκράτωρ. *Hallelujah! for the Lord our God, the Almighty One, reigns.*²⁹ As in the previous instances (19:1, 3, 4), ἀλληλουϊά, *Hallelujah!*, a loanword, is a summons to praise taken from the Hebrew הַלְלֵהוּ (19 OT uses). As such, the subsequent χαίρωμεν καὶ ἀγαλλιῶμεν καὶ δώσωμεν τὴν δόξαν αὐτῷ, *Let us rejoice and be glad and give Him praise*, stands as a definition of ἀλληλουϊά. They both admonish others to give praise.

The loud voice of the multitude of heavenly saints call for praise of God because He reigns supremely. In ἐβασίλευσεν κύριος ὁ θεὸς [ἡμῶν] ὁ παντοκράτωρ, *reigns the Lord our God the Almighty One*, we notice echoes of 11:15-17,

v. 15, καὶ βασιλεύσει εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰῶνων, *and He will reign forever and ever.*

v. 17. ὅτι εἴληφας τὴν δυνάμιν σου τὴν μεγάλην καὶ ἐβασίλευσας, *for You have taken Your great power and have begun to reign.*

Additionally God is addressed in v. 17 similarly: εὐχαριστοῦμέν σοι, κύριε ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ, ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν, *We give thanks to You, Lord God the Almighty One, who is and who was*. The setting here is the seventh trumpet being blown and the celebration of both *loud voices in heaven*, φωναὶ μεγάλαι ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, v. 15, and the 24 elders, οἱ εἴκοσι τέσσαρες πρεσβύτεροι, v. 16. The blowing of this seventh trumpet points to the final scene here in chapter 19 with the declaration ἐγένετο ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ κόσμου τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν καὶ τοῦ χριστοῦ αὐτοῦ, καὶ βασιλεύσει εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰῶνων. *The kingdom of the world has become that of our Lord and His Christ, and He will reign forever and ever* (11:15b).

The celebration is thus based on the exertion of God's sovereign power over everything and everyone. The verb ἐβασίλευσεν is a futuristic function of the Greek aorist tense denoting the exertion of power. It has heavy LXX tones from the OT and also matches the future tense usage in 11:15, 17 but with an emphasis on God exerting that power at the outset of His reign. Thus a more precise translation of ἐβασίλευσεν here is 'He has begun to reign.' The multiple title of God

²⁹ “Vv 6b–8 constitute a hymn of praise that conforms to the OT genre of hymn frequently found in the Psalter. The hymn consists of three parts (Gunkel, Psalms, 10–13; Mowinckel, Psalms 1:81–105; Weiser, Psalms, 52–66; K. Koch, Tradition, 159–70): (1) the invitation to song or hymnic introduction (here represented by ‘Hallelujah!’), (2) the thematic sentence, generally introduced by ‘for’ (here the ὅτι clause, reflecting the Hebrew כִּי *ki*, which can be rendered in a variety of ways; see TDOT 5:434), and (3) the main part of the hymn, which describes God's historical acts (vv 7–8).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1028.]

used here κύριος ὁ θεὸς [ἡμῶν] ὁ παντοκράτωρ, **the Lord our God, the Almighty One**, is used elsewhere in Revelation at 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7; 21:22. The ‘stacking up’ of these into one expression stresses the absolutely total power and authority of God. Nine out of the ten NT uses of ὁ παντοκράτωρ, **the Almighty One**, are found in Revelation at 1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:6, 15; 21:22. It is the LXX translation of the Hebrew **יְהוָה** meaning the Omnipotent One.

Second, then comes the threefold admonition χαίρωμεν καὶ ἀγαλλιῶμεν καὶ δώσωμεν τὴν δόξαν αὐτῷ, **Let us rejoice and be glad and give Him praise** (v. 7a). Perhaps in the background of these admonitions stands Isa. 61:10, which will also be referenced in 21:2.³⁰

When God exerts His total reign at the end what happens? One of the things is the wedding feast of the Lamb which occasions great celebration. Whereas the evil people on earth refused to give praise to God (cf. 16:9), now God’s people give Him unlimited praise for the assertion of His reign over all things.

These admonitions are followed by the statement of reason in the ὅτι clause of vv. 7b-8a: ὅτι ἦλθεν ὁ γάμος τοῦ ἀρνίου καὶ ἡ γυνὴ αὐτοῦ ἠτοίμασεν ἑαυτὴν καὶ ἐδόθη αὐτῇ ἵνα περιβάληται βύσσινον λαμπρὸν καθαρὸν, **for has come the wedding feast of the Lamb and His bride has prepared herself and was granted to her that she should be clothed with fine linen bright and pure.**

The image of a bride and a wedding feast are not frequent images for the people of God inside Revelation. ὁ γάμος, **wedding feast**, is only found twice in Revelation at vv. 7, 7 here. The image ἡ γυνὴ, **wife**, of

³⁰“This passage contains a possible allusion to Isa 61:10 (which is again alluded to in Rev 21:2), ‘I will greatly rejoice [וַיִּשְׂמַח יְהוָה] in the Lord; my soul shall exult [לַגַּת אֲנִי] in my God, for [כִּי]...’ If the author is dependent on Isa 61:10a at this point (which seems likely in view of the imagery that follows), he has rendered it freely and shows no dependence on the LXX (Fekkes, Isaiah, 231–38). Tob 13:15–17 (perhaps also influenced by Isa 61:10), which may also have influenced the description of the New Jerusalem in Rev 21:18–21, begins (in MSS A B) **χαρήθη καὶ ἀγαλλίασαι ἐπὶ τοῖς υἱοῖς τῶν δικαίων**, ‘give thanks and rejoice in the sons of the righteous,’ after which follows a description of the eschatological Jerusalem. The verbal parallels that follow suggest that the expression was relatively fixed in Greek-speaking Judaism. The same two verbs also occur together followed by ὅτι in Matt 5:12: **χαίrete καὶ ἀγαλλιᾶσθε ὅτι**, ‘rejoice and be glad, for.’ Cf. LXX Ps 117:24 (MT 118:24), **ἀγαλλιασώμεθα καὶ εὐφρανθῶμεν**, ‘let us rejoice and be glad’ (cf. Pss 97:1[LXX 96:1]; 118:24[LXX 117:24]; Joel 2:23). See also 1 Enoch 104:13 (M. Black, Apocalypsis, 43), ‘All the righteous will be glad and rejoice [χαρήσονται καὶ ἀγαλλιάσονται] in them.’ The verbs χαίρειν, ‘rejoice,’ and ἀγαλλιᾶν, ‘exult,’ are used together with some frequency in other early Jewish texts as well (T. Abr. [Rec. A] 11:7, 8, 10; Par. Jer. 6:17, **χαῖρε καὶ ἀγαλλιῶ**, ὅτι, ‘rejoice and be glad, for’; here the first imperative is cleverly used to introduce a letter [thus conveying a double meaning], for which the normal salutation would be χαίρειν).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1029.

Christ is only found here (v. 7) and 21:9 (τὴν νύμφην τὴν γυναῖκα τοῦ ἀρνίου, **the bride, the wife of the Lamb**). Here the image of the bride of Christ centers on the wedding feast for the marriage. But in 21:9-27 the new Jerusalem is that bride, vv. 9-10

9 Καὶ ἦλθεν εἷς ἐκ τῶν ἑπτὰ ἀγγέλων τῶν ἐχόντων τὰς ἑπτὰ φιάλας τῶν γεμόντων τῶν ἑπτὰ πληγῶν τῶν ἐσχάτων καὶ ἐλάλησεν μετ’ ἐμοῦ λέγων· δεῦρο, **δείξω σοι τὴν νύμφην τὴν γυναῖκα τοῦ ἀρνίου**. 10 καὶ ἀπήνεγκέν με ἐν πνεύματι ἐπὶ ὄρος μέγα καὶ ὑψηλόν, καὶ ἔδειξέν μοι τὴν πόλιν τὴν ἁγίαν Ἰερουσαλὴμ καταβαίνουσαν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ

9 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, “Come, **I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.**” 10 And in the spirit he carried me away to a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God.

Of course, in the background of the image of God’s people being a bride stands especially early Christian teaching.³¹ The image obviously comes out of the Jewish marriage custom and is developed around it. Betrothal of the church to Christ centers on the conversion of the individual members of the church (cf. 2 Cor. 11:2). Presentation of the bride on ‘wedding day’ centers on the second coming of Christ and the day of judgment (cf. Eph. 5:27). Clearly from that background in the rest

³¹“The metaphor of Christ as the bridegroom and the people of God as the bride was quite widespread in early Christianity. The metaphor of the (Corinthian) church as a chaste virgin betrothed to Christ as husband occurs in 2 Cor 11:2: ‘I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a chaste virgin [παρθένος ἀγνή, i.e., virgo intacta] to Christ.’ The ‘betrothal’ presumably occurred with the conversion of the Corinthians, while the ‘presentation’ to Christ will presumably occur at his coming; during the interim the Church, like a betrothed virgin, must maintain her purity and faithfulness to her one husband. The use of γυνή, ‘wife,’ at this point (see Note 19:7.g.) fits Jewish marriage customs in which engagement was a legally binding initiation of marriage consummated by the wedding (see Deut 22:23–24; Matt 1:18–25; Jos. As. 21:1; Fekkes, Isaiah, 234 n. 26). This metaphor is developed further in Eph 5:25–32, where the archetype for the appropriate relationship between husbands and wives is the self-sacrificing love Christ had for the Church. By his death he could then cleanse her so that eventually he could ‘present’ her as a pure bride to himself at his return. Mark 2:20 (= Matt 9:15b; Luke 5:35; cf. Gos. Thom. 104) appears to equate the figure of the bridegroom with Christ (on 2:20 as a secondary expansion of 2:19, see Roloff, Kerygma, 229–34). The bridegroom as an allegory for Christ also occurs in the parable of the ten virgins in Matt 25:1–13 (Joachim Jeremias, Parables, 51–53; J. R. Donahue, The Gospel in Parable [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988] 101–5). In subsequent early Christian literature, the metaphor of Christ as bridegroom and the Church as bride occurs frequently (2 Clem. 14:2; Tertullian Contra Marc. 5.18; Clement of Alex. Strom. 3.6; Methodius Symp. 7.7; Augustine Sermon. 40.6; see PGL, 928).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1029–1030.]

of the NT John's image in chapter 19 is playing off the presentation of the bride on the 'wedding day.'

If one pushes further into the background of God's people being a bride in the Jewish heritage, some cautions become necessary. Images of Israel being married to God do exist but virtually never in the Jewish literature is Israel married to the Messiah.³² But clearly in both chaps. 19 and 21 the bride belongs to the Lamb rather than to God: ὁ γάμος τοῦ ἀρνίου, *the marriage of the Lamb* (19:7); τὴν νύμφην τὴν γυναῖκα τοῦ ἀρνίου, *the bride, the wife of the Lamb* (21:9). Thus one would have to conclude that John's use of the image of a bride comes primarily out of the existing Christian heritage of the first century.

This first stanza of the causal clause is followed by two more. The second line asserts that the bride has gotten dressed properly for the wedding: καὶ ἡ γυνὴ αὐτοῦ ἠτοίμασεν ἑαυτὴν *and His bride has prepared herself*. How is this done? The subsequent scene (20:11-15) of final judgment answers this question clearly.

12 καὶ εἶδον τοὺς νεκροὺς, τοὺς μεγάλους καὶ τοὺς μικροὺς, ἐστῶτας ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου. καὶ βιβλία ἠνοιχθησαν, καὶ ἄλλο βιβλίον ἠνοιχθη, ὃ ἐστὶν τῆς ζωῆς, καὶ ἐκρίθησαν οἱ νεκροὶ ἐκ τῶν γεγραμμένων ἐν τοῖς βιβλίοις κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτῶν.

12 And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. **Also another book was opened, the book of life.** And the dead **were judged according to their works**, as recorded in the books.

15 καὶ εἶ τις οὐχ εὐρέθη ἐν τῇ βίβλω τῆς ζωῆς γεγραμμένος, ἐβλήθη εἰς τὴν λίμνην τοῦ πυρός.

15 and anyone whose name was not found written in **the book of life** was thrown into the lake of fire.

The bride prepares herself by faithfully living out her conversion commitment to Christ. The ancient Jewish bride was expected to be faithful to her betrothal to her future husband from the time the parents signed the marriage contract to the day of presentation at the wedding. In the commitment of the bride of Christ to her

³²“In dealing with the origins of this imagery, it is important to distinguish between the OT and early Jewish metaphor of the marriage of Yahweh to Israel and the (rarely attested) marriage of the Messiah to Israel (Hos 2:19–20; Jer 3:20; Ezek 16:8–14; Isa 49:18; 50:1; 54:1–6; 62:5; Tg. Ket. Ps 48; see Str-B, 3:822). By the first century A.D., Canticles was understood to refer allegorically to Israel as the bride of God (Tg. Cant.; Joachim Jeremias, TDNT 4:1102; Stauffer, TDNT 1:654); this view was taken over and elaborated by Origen (R. Lawson, Origen, *The Song of Songs: Commentary and Homilies* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1957]). The supposed notion of the Messiah as the bridegroom of Israel occurs only rarely in early Judaism (Gnilka, TTZ 69 [1960] 298–301; Joachim Jeremias, TDNT 4:1101–2; id., *Parables*, 52 n. 13, can find only a single example; Chavasse, *Bride*, 36–37, overemphasizes this notion).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1030.]

husband she then is required to be faithful to that to the day of presentation.

The third stanza of the causal declaration confirms that she has indeed been faithful to her commitment: καὶ ἐδόθη αὐτῇ ἵνα περιβάληται βύσσινον λαμπρὸν καθαρὸν, *and it was granted to her to dress in fine linen bright and clean*. Indeed she has been judged according to her works (καὶ ἐκρίθησαν οἱ νεκροὶ ἐκ τῶν γεγραμμένων ἐν τοῖς βιβλίοις κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτῶν, *and the dead were judged out of what was written in the books, according to their deed*, 20:12b). Having thus passed the exam, she is permitted to dress up in the finest of wedding day clothes for an ancient Jewish bride: βύσσινον λαμπρὸν καθαρὸν, *fine linen bright clean*. Here τὸ βύσσινον, *the fine linen*, of the bride compares to the στολή λευκή, *white robe*, given to the saints in heaven (6:11; 7:9, 13, 14; 22:14). With the image of a στολή, the equivalent of betrothal for the marriage image of βύσσινον is to wash the στολή making it white, λευκή, in the blood of the Lamb (7:14), i.e., conversion.



τὸ γὰρ βύσσινον τὰ δικαιώματα τῶν ἁγίων ἐστίν. for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

The specific meaning of the fine linen wedding day dress is made clear by John's added interpretive comment at the end of verse eight. This he wanted his readers to be clear about.³³

The τὸ βύσσινον equals τὰ δικαιώματα τῶν ἁγίων, *the righteous actions of the saints*. This refers to τὰ ἔργα, *the deeds* (20:12), done in faithfulness of commitment to Christ over their Christian journey on earth. The importance of such τὰ ἔργα is repeatedly stressed in Revelation: 2:2, 5, 6, 19, 23, 26; 3:1, 2, 8, 15; 9:20; 14:13; 15:3; 26:11; 18:6; 20:12, 13; 22:12. In short, these are the validating actions flowing out of commitment to Christ in conversion. And they are what determine whether that commitment is genuine or not. The plural noun τὰ δικαιώματα is only used here and in 15:4. In the latter τὰ δικαιώματα specifies the righteous judgments of God. In 19:8 τὰ δικαιώματα designates the righteous actions of God's people. Catch the link? Our actions flow out of

³³“This explanation was apparently thought necessary because βύσσινον was used earlier in 18:16 of the garments of Babylon-Rome. This is one of several passages within Revelation in which the symbolic significance of a person or thing is explained to the hearers and readers (see 1:20; 4:5; 8:3; 13:6; 14:10; 17:9, 12, 15, 18) and may be a later addition or explanatory gloss to the text (Wellhausen, *Analyse*, 29; Bousset [1906] 428; Charles, 2:127–28; Lohmeyer, 155; Lohse, 97; Jörens, *Evangelium*, 155).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1030.]

God's guiding and controlling presence in our service to Him. Given the judicial background of δικαιώματα, its use here stresses that our actions will face divine examination. Here is what God will be looking for on the day of judgment in the κατὰ τὰ ἔργα, *according to works*, standard of divine judgment (20:12). In the image of final judgment whether our deeds measure up to this standard or not has already been recorded in *what is written in the books*, τῶν γεγραμμένων ἐν τοῖς βιβλίοις.³⁴

B. The angelic instructions to John, vv. 9-10.

9 Καὶ λέγει μοι· γράψον· μακάριοι οἱ εἰς τὸ δεῖπνον τοῦ γάμου τοῦ ἀρνίου κεκλημένοι. καὶ λέγει μοι· οὗτοι οἱ λόγοι ἀληθινοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ εἰσιν. 10 καὶ ἔπεσα ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ποδῶν αὐτοῦ προσκυνῆσαι αὐτῷ. καὶ λέγει μοι· ὄρα μή· σύνδουλός σου εἰμι καὶ τῶν ἀδελφῶν σου τῶν ἐχόντων τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ· τῷ θεῷ προσκύνησον. ἡ γὰρ μαρτυρία Ἰησοῦ ἐστὶν τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς προφητείας.

9 And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are true words of God." 10 Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your comrades who hold the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

This unit of text comes after the depiction of the heavenly celebration and reflects a non-apocalyptic scene where John interacts with an angel. John is still in a visionary trance, but this stands distinct from what he had seen (εἶδον, 18:1) and heard (ἤκουσα, 18:4; 19:1, 6).

At least the assumption is that an angel is interacting with John. The verb λέγει does not have a stated subject. The third singular spelling of the verb specifies a singular subject speaking. The only possible subject contextually in chapter 19 is the voice from the throne in v. 5. In the larger context that includes chapter 18, the ἄλλον ἄγγελον, *other angel*, in 18:1 becomes the next possibility. The parallel text in 14:13, Καὶ ἤκουσα φωνῆς ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ λεγούσης· γράψον, *and I heard a voice out of heaven saying, "Write,"* would favor the unidentified voice in v. 5 as the source of the speaking. This seems to be an angel speaking, probably in both instances. Clearly v. 10 points this direction. But in either instance the command comes directly from God and thus carries His authority.

The command to write, γράψον in the aorist imperative 2nd singular, is common in Revelation with 14 of the 28 uses of the verb in the document.

In 14:13 and 19:9 John is instructed to write a *be-*

³⁴One side note to always remember: *God is interested in quality more than quantity here.*

atitude invoking God's blessings on His people.³⁵

19:9, μακάριοι οἱ εἰς τὸ δεῖπνον τοῦ γάμου τοῦ ἀρνίου κεκλημένοι, *blessed are those called to the supper of the wedding feast of the Lamb*

14:13, μακάριοι οἱ νεκροὶ οἱ ἐν κυρίῳ ἀποθνήσκοντες ἀπ' ἄρτι. *Blessed from now on are the dead who have died in the Lord.*

These are two of the seven (8, if 1:3 is counted as two) beatitudes scattered through Revelation: 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7; 22:14.

A second narrative intro, exactly as the first one, introduces the declaration: καὶ λέγει μοι· οὗτοι οἱ λόγοι ἀληθινοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ εἰσιν. *And he says to me, "These words are true from God."*³⁶ This compares closely to the causal statement in the command to write in 21:5, Καὶ εἶπεν ὁ καθήμενος ἐπὶ τῷ θρόνῳ· ἰδοὺ καινὰ ποιῶ πάντα καὶ λέγει· γράψον, ὅτι οὗτοι οἱ λόγοι πιστοὶ καὶ ἀληθινοὶ εἰσιν. *And said the One sitting upon the throne, "Behold I make all things new" and He says, "Write, because these words are faithful and true."* Also note 22:6 with the same thrust, οὗτοι οἱ λόγοι πιστοὶ καὶ ἀληθινοί, *these words are faithful and true.*

Again with the use of the adjective ἀληθινοὶ from ἀλήθεια, one must remember the Jewish rather than Greek background for the idea of true, truth.³⁷ As John 14:6 defines ἀλήθεια, truth is God as revealed in His character and actions. To know truth is to know God. If something is true, it must reflect the character and actions of God. Otherwise it is false. Truth is never an abstraction inside the Bible!

Thus what has just been spoken needs to be written down because the words reflect God and His desires. That is, contextually here, a summons to the wedding banquet meal is of supreme importance because the summons comes from God. This will be a terrifically important meal.

One should remember that this is the only time a wedding banquet is mentioned in Revelation to His people. In 19:17b-18, an angel extends an invitation to vultures flying in the sky,

17 Καὶ εἶδον ἓνα ἄγγελον ἐστῶτα ἐν τῷ ἡλίῳ καὶ ἔκραξεν [ἐν] φωνῇ μεγάλῃ λέγων πᾶσιν τοῖς ὀρνέοις τοῖς πετομένοις ἐν μεσουρανήματι· **Δεῦτε συνάχθητε εἰς τὸ δεῖπνον τὸ μέγα τοῦ θεοῦ** 18 ἵνα φάγητε σάρκας βασιλέων καὶ σάρκας χιλιάρχων καὶ σάρκας ἰσχυρῶν καὶ σάρκας ἵππων καὶ τῶν καθημένων ἐπ' αὐτῶν καὶ σάρκας πάντων ἐλευθέρων τε καὶ δούλων καὶ μικρῶν

³⁵These forms contain the invoking of μακάριοι along with the prerequisite condition defined in the subject. They do not contain the typical third element of a causal clause defining the nature of the blessing.

³⁶An alternative translation could be "These true words are from God."

³⁷The word group includes ἀλήθεια (noun), ἀληθής (adjective), ἀληθινός (adjective), ἀληθεύω (verb).

καὶ μεγάλων.

17 Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly in midheaven, **“Come, gather for the great supper of God, 18 to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of the mighty, the flesh of horses and their riders—flesh of all, both free and slave, both small and great.”**

But this is a τὸ δεῖπνον τὸ μέγα τοῦ θεοῦ, a big supper from God (v. 17b). This meal is something different than the wedding feast banquet mention in v. 10.³⁸ This later supper is an invitation to vultures to feast on the dead carcasses of those destroyed in the battle against God. The idea of a Messianic banquet at the second coming of Christ surfaces at the Lord’s Supper texts in Mk. 14:25 // Mt. 26:29 // Lk. 22:18.³⁹ But these texts do not

³⁸“The term δεῖπνον, ‘dinner,’ occurs only here and in v 17 in Revelation, where it refers to very different things; the wedding banquet of the Lamb (v 9) is consciously formulated in antithesis to the destruction of the enemies of God who are devoured by wild animals (v 17). The metaphor of the wedding banquet is based on the social convention of inviting friends and relatives to a wedding feast (Matt 22:1–10 = Gos. Thom. 64 [a feast for an unspecified reason rather than specifically a wedding feast is in view here]; Matt 25:10; Luke 12:36; 14:8; Acts Thom. 4–5, 7, 13; 4 Ezra 9:47; Jos. As. 21:8; Apoc. Ezek. [Epiphanius Haer. 64.70.7; Denis, Fragmenta, 121]; Diodorus Siculus 13.84.1; Diogenes Laertius 3.2; see Blümner, *Greeks*, 138–39), usually referred to by the plural form γάμοι, ‘wedding celebrations.’ It is often claimed (with some exaggeration) that the motif of the messianic banquet is a common theme in apocalyptic literature (Russell, *Apocalyptic*, 322). While there are a number of references to eating and drinking in the kingdom of God or the heavenly world in early Jewish and early Christian literature, these passages appear to preserve several traditions that exhibit relative independence from each other. (1) The primeval monsters Behemoth and Leviathan will serve as food for the righteous in the eschaton (2 Apoc. Bar. 29:4; 4 Ezra 6:52; b. B. Bat. 74). This tradition may be based on Ps 74:14 and Ezek 32:4, where God killed Leviathan and gave him as food for wild animals (see Volz, *Eschatologie*, 389; Frost, *OT Apocalyptic*, 152–53). (2) According to Isa 25:6–8, God will provide a sumptuous feast for all people on the mountain of the Lord in the eschaton. In one passage in Q (Matt 8:11 = Luke 13:29) the Messiah is missing, but the motifs of gathering, Jews and Gentiles, and table fellowship are present (following the Matthaean order; see Kloppenborg, *Formation of Q*, 226–27).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1032–1033.]

³⁹“In the narrative of the Last Supper, Jesus speaks of drinking new wine with the disciples in the Father’s kingdom (Mark 14:25 = Matt 26:29; cf. Luke 22:18), perhaps reflecting the tradition of a messianic banquet. Some scholars argue that the meals Jesus shared with ‘tax collectors and sinners’ were intended by Jesus to serve as anticipations of the final eschatological banquet (J. P. Meier, *Mentor, Message and Miracles*, vol. 2 of *A Marginal Jew* [New York: Doubleday, 1994] 302–9). In an enigmatic passage in Luke 14:15, a blessing is pronounced on those who will eat bread in the kingdom of God. A late Christian interpolation in 4 Ezra (often designated 5 Ezra) 2:38 exhorts, ‘Rise and stand, and see at the

portray it as a wedding feast. The context for them is the Passover observance meal. Most likely John’s image of a wedding banquet is a symbolical way of affirming Christ’s full acceptance of His people for eternity. Interestingly, the latter image in 21:9b, δεῦρο, δεῖξω σοι τὴν νύμφην τὴν γυναῖκα τοῦ ἀρνίου. **“Come! I will show you the bride, that is, the wife of the Lamb,”** reflects a post wedding feast perspective. And, this bride of Christ is defined in terms of being a city, the new Jerusalem (21:10–27). And it is explained against the backdrop of Ezek. 48:30–35.

John then makes a mistake in responding (v. 10): καὶ ἔπεσα ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ποδῶν αὐτοῦ προσκυνῆσαι αὐτῷ. καὶ λέγει μοι· ὄρα μή· σύνδουλός σου εἰμι καὶ τῶν ἀδελφῶν σου τῶν ἐχόντων τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ· τῷ θεῷ προσκύνησον. ἢ γὰρ μαρτυρία Ἰησοῦ ἐστὶν τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς προφητείας. **Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, “You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your comrades who hold the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”**

John seems to be prone to this mistake, for it happens again in 22:8–9,

8 Κἀγὼ Ἰωάννης ὁ ἀκούων καὶ βλέπων ταῦτα. καὶ ὅτε ἤκουσα καὶ ἔβλεψα, ἔπεσα προσκυνῆσαι ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ποδῶν τοῦ ἀγγέλου τοῦ δεικνύοντός μοι ταῦτα. 9 καὶ λέγει μοι· ὄρα μή· σύνδουλός σου εἰμι καὶ τῶν ἀδελφῶν σου τῶν προφητῶν καὶ τῶν

feast of the Lord the number of those who have been sealed.’ Similarly, the Christian edition of T. Isaac 6:22 observes that the righteous ‘shall be present from the first moment of the millennial banquet.’ (3) In an apparent development of the last type, the Messiah becomes the one who provides nourishment for the righteous in the eschaton. It is this tradition that finds expression in 1 Enoch 62:14 (tr. Knibb), where it is said that the righteous will dwell with the Son of man ‘and eat, and lie down, and rise up for ever and ever.’ In Luke 22:28–30, Jesus says that those disciples who persevere will eat and drink at his table in his kingdom (though it is questionable whether Jesus functions as the Messiah in this passage). In 3 Enoch 48A:10, the gathering of Israel to Jerusalem from among the Gentiles is followed by commensality (tr. P. Alexander, *OTP* 1:302): ‘Moreover, the kingdom of Israel, gathered from the four quarters of the world, shall eat with the Messiah, and the gentiles shall eat with them.’ (4) Access to the fruit of the tree of life is a metaphor for eschatological salvation (Rev 2:7; 22:14). (5) Eschatological manna is an eschatological symbol of salvation for the righteous (see Comment on 2:17).

“The metaphor of the ‘wedding feast’ of the Lamb mentioned in Rev 19:9 is a single event (as one might expect for such singular occasions), whereas the meal mentioned in 1 Enoch 62:14 (perhaps alluding to Zeph 3:13) continues indefinitely. A feature of the so-called divine warrior hymn is the concluding victory banquet (P. D. Hanson, *Dawn*, 300–322). In Greek and Roman sources a festive meal was sometimes similarly used to symbolize the happy after-life (Plato 2.363c–d; Lattimore, *Epitaphs*, 52).”

[David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1033–1034.]

τηρούντων τοὺς λόγους τοῦ βιβλίου τούτου· τῷ θεῷ προσκύνησον.

8 I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me; 9 but he said to me, “You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your comrades the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God!”

I suspect had we have been participating in this apocalyptic vision our tendency to prostrate ourselves before all these heavenly beings would have been much like John’s. Such mistakes seem to have been common in the ancient world.⁴⁰

⁴⁰“The motif of prostration following a divine revelation (found here and in 22:8 in contexts that are very similar; see the synoptic comparison below) occurs occasionally in early Jewish and early Christian literature (Dan 2:46; Asc. Isa. 7.21–22; Pistis Sophia 1.27 [ed. Schmidt-Till, p. 24, lines 20–23 = ed. Schmidt-MacDermot, pp. 39–40]; 4.138 [ed. Schmidt-Till, p. 235, lines 19–22 = ed. Schmidt-MacDermot, p. 357]). A parallel episode occurs in Asc. Isa. 7.21 (Hennecke-Schneemelcher, NTA 2:654):

And I fell on my face to worship him, and the angel who conducted me did not allow me, but said to me, “Worship neither angel nor throne which belongs to the six heavens—for this reason I was sent to conduct thee—till I tell thee in the seventh heaven.”

“This parallel is a much broader prohibition that interdicts the worship of both angel and throne (a metaphor for a type of angelic being; see Col 1:16; T. Levi 3:8).

“Another parallel is even more telling in the same document, Asc. Isa. 8:5, where the *angelus interpres*, after being called ‘Lord’ by Isaiah, responds, ‘I am not your Lord, but your companion’ (a response strikingly similar to the response of the angel in Rev 19:10b and 22:9). Bauckham argues that the angel who refuses worship is a traditional apocalyptic motif that functions to safeguard monotheism (“Worship,” 120–32). He identifies two stock reactions in apocalyptic literature to angelophanies, involuntary collapse (T. Abr. [Rec. A] 9; 2 Enoch [Rec. J and A] 21:2; 3 Enoch 1:7; Matt 28:4; Tob 12:16–22; see Comment on 1:17) and voluntary prostration in worship (Apoc. Zeph. 6:11–15; 2 Enoch 1:7). Apoc. Zeph. 6:11–15 (second century A.D.) is striking because it contains a description of the angel Eremel, a passage with similarities to both Dan 10:5–14 and Rev 1:13–18, and contains as well the motif of the refusal of an angel to accept worship (tr. Wintermute, OTP 1:513):

Then I arose and stood, and I saw a great angel standing before me with his face shining like the rays of the sun in its glory since his face is like that which is perfected in its glory. And he was girded as if a golden girdle were upon his breast. His feet were like bronze which is melted in a fire. And when I saw him, I rejoiced, for I thought that the Lord Almighty had come to visit me. I fell upon my face, and I worshiped him. He said to me, “Take heed. Don’t worship me. I am not the Lord Almighty, but I am the great angel Eremel, who is over the abyss and Hades.”

“These obscure and late texts hardly constitute evidence for an apocalyptic literary tradition. Rather, mistaking a human being for a deity appearing in human form is a motif found frequently in Greek and Hellenistic literature (Iliad 6.108–9, 128–29; Nonnos Dionysiaca 7.226–54; 10.196–216; 42.158–63). In Greek mythic

Is John recording this rather embarrassing episode in order to caution believers against worshipping angels? Many commentators are so convinced and make a good case for their view. Clearly angels were worshiped both by Jews and pagans in John’s world, with the existing literature containing both affirmations of such worship and prohibitions against it, which in itself strongly points toward such practices in that world.⁴¹

tradition the gods appear in various guises and sometimes, but not always, are recognizable (Odyssey 13.311–13; 17.485; Hymn to Demeter 1.111; Mussies, “Identification,” 1–18), a tradition repeated in a Judaized form in Heb 13:2 and Philo Som. 1.232, ‘To souls which are still in a body, God gives himself the likeness of angels [ἀγγέλους εἰκαζόμενον].’ Mistaking heroes or otherwise exceptional people for deities is a motif found frequently in both Hellenistic novels (Xenophon Ephesiaca 1.12; Chariton 1.14.1) and early Christian apocryphal acts (Acts Pet. 10; Acts Thom. 109); see Söder, *Apostelgeschichten*, 95–102. A relatively close verbal parallel to Rev 19:10 occurs in Acts 10:25, where Cornelius greets Peter by falling at his feet and worshipping him (πεσὼν ἐπὶ τοὺς πόδας προσεκύνησεν), only to be rebuked by Peter, who says that he is a human being. This passage combines the three motifs of falling down, worship, and rebuke (cf. Acts 14:11–15). A parallel from Hellenistic literature is found in Lucian *Icaromenippus* 13 (LCL tr.), which combines the motifs of worship and rebuke, suggesting that this combination was not restricted to early Jewish or early Christian literature:

I was downcast and almost in tears when the philosopher Empedocles came and stood behind me, looking like a cinder, as he was covered with ashes and all burned up. On catching sight of him I was a bit startled, to tell the truth, and thought I beheld a lunar spirit; but he said, “Don’t be alarmed, Menippus, ‘No god am I: why liken me to them?’ I am the natural philosopher Empedocles.”

“This text is a satirical version of the conventional Greek conception that gods could masquerade as human beings; here a human being is thought to be a god.”

[David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1034–1036.]

⁴¹“Many scholars understand Rev 19:10 and its parallel in 22:8–9 as a polemically motivated attempt to counter the practice of angel worship or angel veneration in the Christian congregations of Asia Minor (Bousset [1906] 493; Swete, 248, 304; Kiddle-Ross, 382; Boring, 194; Sweet, 280; Roloff [ET] 213). This view is not unproblematic, and there are several related issues that need consideration. First of all, the motif of the angel who refuses worship from a seer in the context of an angelic revelation (as in Rev 19:10 and 22:9) is a literary motif with many parallels in apocalyptic literature, though the motif is not restricted to apocalyptic. As a literary motif, it is difficult if not impossible to claim that the constituent motif of the fear attributed to the recipient of angelic revelations is anything more than a formal part of this literary motif (against Stuckenbruck, *Angel*, 87–92).

“A related issue is the problem of whether a cult of angels existed in Judaism, affirmed by some scholars (Schäfer, *Rivalität*, 67) but denied by others (Carr, *Angels*, 69–71; Hurtado, *One God*, 27–35). Philo thought that those who worshiped angels were in error (Fug. 212), yet he also thought that God revealed himself in angelic form (Som. 1.232, 238), which creates some tension in his system. The ‘worship of angels’ (θρησκεία τῶν ἀγγέλων) is men-

In the angel's rebuke of John, καὶ λέγει μοι... (v. 10b), some interesting parallels surface.⁴²

ὄρα μή. This idiom from the verb ὄραω with the

tioned in Col 2:18 as an error, which many scholars maintain to reflect a cult of angels purportedly Jewish in origin (Simon, *Verus Israel*, 345; Williams, *JTS* 10 [1909] 413–38), though what may be meant here is participation in angelic worship of God (Francis, “Angel Worship,” 109–34); see the review of research in Stuckenbruck, *Angel*, 111–19. The role of angels is particularly prominent in Jewish magical texts such as the *Sepher ha-Razim* (see also Jos. J.W. 2.142). There are, however, a number of passages in rabbinic literature that prohibit images, sacrifices, prayer, and veneration directed toward angels (b. Sanh. 38b; y. Ber. 9.13a–b; Exod. Rab. 32.4; see Schäfer, *Rivalität*, 65–72; Stuckenbruck, *Angels*, 52–75).

“Angels had a prominent place in early Jewish Christianity (Daniélou, *Jewish Christianity*, 117–46). According to Origen, his Jewish teacher claimed that the two seraphim spoken of in Isa 6 were the Son of God and the Holy Spirit (De principiis 1.3.4; 4.3.14). Celsus charged that the Jews ‘worship angels and are addicted to sorcery’ (Contra Celsum 1.26) and that they ‘worship the heaven and the angels in it’ (Contra Celsum 5.6), though it is likely that he culled these views from Greco-Jewish literature; see Lange, Origen, 42. Origen is quick to rebut such charges (Contra Celsum 1.26; 5.6), but other early Christian writers seem to echo this view (Aristides *Apol.* 14.4; *Kerygma Petri* in Clement Alex. *Strom.* 6.5.41; cf. Origen *Comm. Joh.* 13.17). It is possible that these Christian writers were slandering Judaism by characterizing their observance of the Torah as the ‘worship of angels’ (see Stuckenbruck, *Angels*, 142).

“It is worth noting, however, that a Greco-Roman cult of angels did in fact exist in Anatolia and that worship was accorded them (see Sokolowski, *HTR* 53 [1960] 225ff.; Sheppard, *Talanta* 12–13 [1980–81] 77–101; Mitchell, *Anatolia* 2:46; for a review of this phenomenon, see Stuckenbruck, *Angels*, 181–91). Similarly, Teixidor (Pagan God, 14–15) notes that various cults of angels were known in the ancient Near East, such as the ‘Angel of Bel’ (Malakbel) and the ‘Holy Angels of Baal Shamin’ at Palmyra, the ‘Angels of Holiness’ at Coptos, and the ‘Angel’ of Milkastart, revered near Tyre.”

[David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1036.]

⁴²“The words of the angelic guide in claiming to be a fellow servant with John and his brothers and sisters have a close parallel in Asc. Isa. 8:4–5, where ‘Isaiah’ addresses his angelic guide and receives a mild rebuke (tr. Knibb, *OTP* 2:168): “ ‘What (is) this which I see, my lord?’ And he said to me, ‘I am not your lord, but your companion.’ ” Another apparent parallel is found in the reason for not worshipping the sun, moon, and stars in Philo *Decal.* 64, ‘Let us ... refrain from worshipping those [i.e., the heavenly bodies] who by nature are our brothers [τοὺς ἀδελφούς φύσει μὴ προσκυνῶμεν], even though they have been given a substance purer and more immortal than ours.’ The emphasis on worshipping God rather than the angelic messenger has a parallel in the reaction of Joseph when his brothers did obeisance before him in Gen 50:19, ‘Do not be afraid! Am I in the place of God?’ (a rhetorical question rejected by Tg. Ps.-J., Tg. Onq., and Tg. Neof. on Gen 50:19). Similarly, when Barnabas and Paul rejected the worship of the people from Lystra who thought that they were gods, they said, ‘Gentlemen, why are you doing this? We are people just like you’ (Acts 14:15).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1038.]

negative μή has something of the sense of ‘watch out’ to not do something.⁴³ Here and in 22:9, it is used elliptically with the context supplying what John is not to do. The present imperative defines this as ongoing responsibility that extends beyond just this event.

σύνδουλός σου εἰμι καὶ τῶν ἀδελφῶν σου τῶν ἐχόντων τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ. I am a fellow servant with you and your comrades who hold the testimony of Jesus. Compare 22:9, σύνδουλός σου εἰμι καὶ τῶν ἀδελφῶν σου τῶν προφητῶν καὶ τῶν τηρούντων τοὺς λόγους τοῦ βιβλίου τούτου, I am your fellow servant of your brothers the prophets and of those keeping the words of this book. In Hebrews 1:5–14, the argument is made that angels do not stand in a higher position before God than do believers. Thus they must not be worshiped by believers, as is implied in σύνδουλός σου, your fellow servant. Prophets here and in 22:9 are Christian preachers of the testimony of Jesus as the defining phrase καὶ τῶν τηρούντων τοὺς λόγους τοῦ βιβλίου τούτου of τῶν ἀδελφῶν σου τῶν προφητῶν in 22:9 makes clear.

The phrase τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ, the testimony of Jesus, is better understood as the witness to/about Jesus. In the parallel of 22:9, this is τοὺς λόγους τοῦ βιβλίου τούτου, the words/message of this book. The phrase ἡ μαρτυρία Ἰησοῦ occurs several times in Revelation: 1:2, 9; 12:17; 19:10b; 20:4. And several other related phrases also are found: 1) ἡ μαρτυρία αὐτῶν, their testimony (11:7 and 12:11), 2) τὴν μαρτυρίαν ἣν εἶχον, the testimony which they bore (6:9), 3) τοῦ αἵματος τῶν μαρτύρων Ἰησοῦ, the blood of the witnesses to Jesus (17:6), and 4) τὴν πίστιν Ἰησοῦ, faith in (or, faithfulness to) Jesus (14:12).

τῷ θεῷ προσκύνησον. Worship God! The identical command comes at the same sequence point in 22:9.⁴⁴ The aorist imperative, as here, is an intensified command to take action. Here the first commandment of the Decalogue is clearly the basis for this command.⁴⁵ The monotheism of Judaism and then of

⁴³The idiomatic nature of ὄρα μή will occasion a wide variety of translation expression since it cannot be translated literally as an idiomatic expression. The Greek expression is a strong warning against worshipping the angel who spoke to John.

⁴⁴“The emphasis on worshipping God rather than the angelic messenger has a parallel in the reaction of Joseph when his brothers did obeisance before him in Gen 50:19, ‘Do not be afraid! Am I in the place of God?’ (a rhetorical question rejected by Tg. Ps.-J., Tg. Onq., and Tg. Neof. on Gen 50:19). Similarly, when Barnabas and Paul rejected the worship of the people from Lystra who thought that they were gods, they said, ‘Gentlemen, why are you doing this? We are people just like you’ (Acts 14:15).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1038.]

⁴⁵**Exodus 20:1–6.** 20.1 Καὶ ἐλάλησεν κύριος πάντας τοὺς λόγους τούτους λέγων ἄ 2 Ἐγώ εἰμι κύριος ὁ θεός σου, ὅστις ἐξήγαγόν σε ἐκ γῆς Αἰγύπτου ἐξ οἴκου δουλείας. ἄ 3 οὐκ ἔσονται σοι θεοὶ ἕτεροι πλὴν ἐμοῦ. ἄ — 4 οὐ ποιήσεις σεαυτῷ εἰδωλον οὐδὲ παντὸς ὁμοίωμα, ὅσα ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ ἄνω καὶ ὅσα ἐν τῇ γῇ κάτω καὶ

Christianity was strict and uncompromising in the first century world.

ἡ γὰρ μαρτυρία Ἰησοῦ ἐστὶν τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς προφητείας. For the witness to Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy. In the background here stands the teaching of Jesus about believers being persecuted for their witness concerning Him: Mark 13:11 // Mt. 10:20 // Lk. 12:11-12; 21:15. For this interpretive tradition and promise see Eusebius *Hist. eccl.* 5.3.3; Tertullian *Ad mart.* 1.3; Cyprian *Ep.* 81.2. Christ promises to give them through His Spirit the words they need to speak in situations of persecution.⁴⁶ Every authentic witness to Jesus comes from God's Spirit: 1 Cor. 12:3; 1 John 4:2-3; John 15:26-27. The phrase τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς προφητείας, found only here in Revelation, is best understood as 'the prophetic Spirit,' with τῆς προφητείας functioning as the basic descriptive genitive case.⁴⁷ Thus the witness to Jesus

ὅσα ἐν τοῖς ὕδασιν ὑποκάτω τῆς γῆς.† 5 οὐ προσκυνήσεις αὐτοῖς οὐδὲ μὴ λατρεύσεις αὐτοῖς· ἐγὼ γάρ εἰμι κύριος ὁ θεὸς σου, θεὸς ζηλωτῆς ἀποδιδούς ἀμαρτίας πατέρων ἐπὶ τέκνα ἕως τρίτης καὶ τετάρτης γενεᾶς τοῖς μισοῦσίν με† 6 καὶ ποιῶν ἔλεος εἰς χιλιάδας τοῖς ἀγαπῶσίν με καὶ τοῖς φυλάσσουσιν τὰ προστάγματά μου.†

20.1 Then God spoke all these words: 2 I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; 3 **you shall have no other gods before me.**

4 You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. 5 You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, 6 but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.

⁴⁶“The connection with prophecy found in this verse has parallels with the inspiration promised to those who will be called before various assemblies to answer for their faith in Christ (Mark 13:11; Matt 10:20; Luke 12:11–12; 21:15; Eusebius *Hist. eccl.* 5.3.3; Tertullian *Ad mart.* 1.3; Cyprian *Ep.* 81.2; see Lampe, “Testimony,” 245–58). The subject of prophetic speech in early Christianity is frequently the exalted status of Jesus (1 Cor 12:3; 1 John 4:2–3; John 15:26–27). Here the striking character of the ‘testimony concerning Jesus’ is that it is equated with the ‘spirit of prophecy’; i.e., since true prophecy witnesses to Jesus, any witness to Jesus can be identified as prophecy, and thus prophecy is not limited to those who are designated ‘prophets’ in a special sense. Since 22:9 was based on 19:10, this phrase in 22:9 is probably a gloss to show the connection between ‘the testimony concerning Jesus’ and prophecy (a possibility suggested by Charles, 2:130).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1039.]

⁴⁷“The phrase should probably be understood as ‘the prophetic Spirit,’ i.e., the power that allows certain individuals to have visionary experiences and gives them revelatory insights not available to ordinary people (Schweizer, *TDNT* 6:449). It is parallel to the expression τὸ πνεῦμα προφητικόν, ‘the prophetic Spirit,’ a phrase that occurs with some frequency in second- and third-century Christian authors as a way of referring to a mode of prophetic inspiration (Justin 1 *Apol.* 6:2; 13.3; 31.1; Dial. 55.1; Athenagoras *Leg.* 10.4; 18.2; Irenaeus *Adv. haer.* 1.13.4 [used of Marcus];

shared among the angel, John and his brothers comes from the empowering of God's Spirit. Most immediately this statement applies to the beatitude (v. 9a) spoken by the angel to John for him to write down. As such, v. 10b stands as a further validation of the initial one given in his second declaration: οὗτοι οἱ λόγοι ἀληθινοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ εἰσιν, **these words are genuinely from God** (v. 9b).

2. What does the text mean to us today?

Two applications of this text jump out at me.

First, God's people can rest assured of ultimate victory over evil. But the victory is totally God's work. We stand as the beneficiaries of His triumph over all evil. But we should not be surprised at this. God is ultimate holiness and in His purity evil will not and cannot be tolerated. The evil thrust upon the initial readers of Revelation from evil Rome was substantial. And yet it only signals even greater evil to be unleashed upon the world at the end of human history. John struggled to find the right language to give full depiction of this in chapter eighteen. But in vv. 1-8 of chapter nineteen the heavenly celebration of the righteousness of God and His judgments upon this awful evil is extensive and includes all of heaven. In this we can and should rejoice ourselves.

Second, in the angelic command for John to write down the beatitude in v. 9 we discover insights of tremendous importance. For those sharing in this final victory over evil at the coming of Christ, i.e., His wedding banquet, there will be indescribable blessing from our heavenly Father. One very important issue coming out of vv. 9-10 is the stern warning to give God alone our exclusive worship and veneration. Absolutely no one else, including angels, are to receive such adoration. The monotheism of our religion must remain firmly in place just as God demanded in the first of the Ten Commandments. God alone is to be worshiped.

As we approach the ending of Revelation, the greater will be our joy in looking to that Day.

Clement of Alex. *Protrep.* 9). Another striking parallel occurs in *Hermas Mand.* 11.9 in the phrase ‘the angel [or messenger] of the prophetic spirit [ὁ ἄγγελος τοῦ προφητικοῦ πνεύματος (var. lect. τοῦ προφήτου)].’ The phrase ‘spirit of prophecy’ occurs occasionally in early Jewish texts (though it is does not appear to be present in the DSS), particularly in the targums, as in Tg. Isa 61:1 (Sperber, Aramaic 3:121), ‘The prophet said, the spirit of prophecy [רוח נבואה] from before the Lord God is upon me.’ In two parallel texts in Tg. Onq. Gen 41:38 and Tg. Ps.-J. Gen 41:38, Pharaoh describes Joseph as ‘a man in whom there is the spirit of prophecy from before the Lord [רוח נבואה מִיַּי בִּיה] *gbr drwh nbw'h mn yy byh*]’ (the MT has רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים בּוֹ *āšer rūah 'ēlōhīm bō* ‘in whom the spirit of God dwells’); see Aberbach-Grossfeld, *Targum Onkelos*, 240–41. The phrase רוּחַ נְבוּאָה *rūah nēbū'*, ‘spirit of prophecy,’ also occurs in Tg. Onq. Num 11:25, 26, 29; 24:2; 27:18; Tg. Neof. Exod 2:12 (MS M); 31:3 (spirit of a prophet?).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1039.]