



# THE REVELATION OF JOHN

## Bible Study 44

Text: Rev. 18:9-24

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1 Ἀποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ τοῦ ἁγίου καὶ ἀποστόλου Ἰησοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ ἡ ἐκδηλοῦσα τοὺς λόγους τοῦ βιβλίου τούτου. 2 ὁ ἀγγέλος εὐλόγησε αὐτὸν ὃς εἶπεν, καὶ ἐσήμανεν ἃς ἐμαρτύρησεν τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ ὅσα εἶδεν. 3 Μακάριοι οἱ ἀναγινώσκοντες καὶ οἱ ἀκούοντες τοὺς λόγους τοῦ βιβλίου τούτου. 4 ἢ γεγραμμένα.

**QUICK LINKS**

1. What the text meant.  
 Historical Aspects:  
 External History  
 Internal History  
 Literary Aspects:  
 Genre  
 Literary Setting  
 Literary Structure

Exegesis of the Text:  
 A. [Lament of the Heavenly Voice](#), vv. 9-20  
 B. [Symbolic Act of the Mighty Angel](#), vv. 21-24

2. What the text means.

# The Fall of Babylon, pt. 2

### Greek NT

9 Καὶ κλαύσουσιν καὶ κόψονται ἐπ’ αὐτήν οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς οἱ μετ’ αὐτῆς πορνεύσαντες καὶ στρηνιάσαντες, ὅταν βλέπωσιν τὸν καπνὸν τῆς πυρώσεως αὐτῆς, 10 ἀπὸ μακρόθεν ἔστηκότες διὰ τὸν φόβον τοῦ βασανισμοῦ αὐτῆς λέγοντες· οὐαὶ οὐαὶ, ἡ πόλις ἡ μεγάλη, Βαβυλῶν ἡ πόλις ἡ ἰσχυρά, ὅτι μιᾶ ὥρᾳ ἦλθεν ἡ κρίσις σου.

11 Καὶ οἱ ἔμποροι τῆς γῆς κλαίουσιν καὶ πενθοῦσιν ἐπ’ αὐτήν, ὅτι τὸν γόμον αὐτῶν οὐδεὶς ἀγοράζει οὐκέτι 12 γόμον χρυσοῦ καὶ ἀργύρου καὶ λίθου τιμίου καὶ μαργαριτῶν καὶ βυσσίνου καὶ πορφύρας καὶ σιρικοῦ καὶ κοκκίνου, καὶ πᾶν ξύλον θύϊνον καὶ πᾶν σκεῦος ἐλεφάντινον καὶ πᾶν σκεῦος ἐκ ξύλου τιμιωτάτου καὶ χαλκοῦ καὶ σιδήρου καὶ μαρμάρου, 13 καὶ κιννάμωμον καὶ ἄμωμον καὶ θυμιάματα καὶ μύρον καὶ λίβανον καὶ οἶνον καὶ ἔλαιον καὶ σεμίδαλιν καὶ σῖτον καὶ κτήνη καὶ πρόβατα, καὶ ἵππων καὶ ῥεδῶν καὶ σωμάτων, καὶ ψυχὰς ἀνθρώπων.

### La Biblia de las Américas

9 Y los reyes de la tierra que cometieron actos de inmoralidad y vivieron sensualmente con ella, llorarán y se lamentarán por ella cuando vean el humo de su incendio, 10 mirando de pie desde lejos por causa del temor de su tormento, y diciendo: “¡Ay, ay, la gran ciudad, Babilonia, la ciudad fuerte!, porque en una hora ha llegado tu juicio.” 11 Y los mercaderes de la tierra lloran y se lamentan por ella, porque ya nadie compra sus mercaderías: 12 cargamentos de oro, plata, piedras preciosas, perlas, lino fino, púrpura, seda y escarlata; toda clase de maderas olorosas y todo objeto de maderas preciosas, bronce, hierro y mármol; 13 y canela, especias aromáticas, incienso, perfume, mirra, vino, aceite de oliva; y flor de harina, trigo, bestias, ovejas, caballos, carros, esclavos y vidas humanas. 14 Y el fruto que tanto has anhelado se ha apartado de ti, y todas las cosas que eran lujosas y espléndidas se han alejado

### NRSV

9 And the kings of the earth, who committed fornication and lived in luxury with her, will weep and wail over her when they see the smoke of her burning; 10 they will stand far off, in fear of her torment, and say, “Alas, alas, the great city, Babylon, the mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come.” 11 And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn for her, since no one buys their cargo anymore, 12 cargo of gold, silver, jewels and pearls, fine linen, purple, silk and scarlet, all kinds of scented wood, all articles of ivory, all articles of costly wood, bronze, iron, and marble, 13 cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, olive oil, choice flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, slaves—and human lives. 14 “The fruit for which your soul longed has gone from you, and all your dainties and your splendor are lost to you, never to be found again!” 15 The merchants of these wares, who gained wealth from her, will stand far off, in fear of her torment, weeping and

### NLT

9 And the rulers of the world who took part in her immoral acts and enjoyed her great luxury will mourn for her as they see the smoke rising from her charred remains. 10 They will stand at a distance, terrified by her great torment. They will cry out, “How terrible, how terrible for Babylon, that great city! In one single moment God’s judgment came on her.” 11 The merchants of the world will weep and mourn for her, for there is no one left to buy their goods. 12 She bought great quantities of gold, silver, jewels, pearls, fine linen, purple dye, silk, scarlet cloth, every kind of perfumed wood, ivory goods, objects made of expensive wood, bronze, iron, and marble. 13 She also bought cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, olive oil, fine flour, wheat, cattle, sheep, horses, chariots, and slaves -- yes, she even traded in human lives. 14 “All the fancy things you loved so much are gone,”

14 καὶ ἡ ὀπώρα σου τῆς ἐπιθυμίας τῆς ψυχῆς ἀπῆλθεν ἀπὸ σοῦ, καὶ πάντα τὰ λιπαρὰ καὶ τὰ λαμπρὰ ἀπώλετο ἀπὸ σοῦ καὶ οὐκέτι οὐ μὴ αὐτὰ εὐρήσουσιν.

15 Οἱ ἔμποροι τούτων οἱ πλουτήσαντες ἀπ' αὐτῆς ἀπὸ μακρόθεν στήσονται διὰ τὸν φόβον τοῦ βασιανισμοῦ αὐτῆς κλαίοντες καὶ πενθοῦντες λέγοντες·

οὐαὶ οὐαὶ, ἡ πόλις ἡ μεγάλη, ἡ περιβεβλημένη βύσσινον καὶ πορφυροῦν καὶ κόκκινον καὶ κεχρυσωμένη [ἐν] χρυσίῳ καὶ λίθῳ τιμίῳ καὶ μαργαρίτῃ,

17 ὅτι μιᾶ ὥρᾳ ἡρημώθη ὁ τοσοῦτος πλοῦτος.

Καὶ πᾶς κυβερνήτης καὶ πᾶς ὁ ἐπὶ τόπον πλέων καὶ ναῦται καὶ ὅσοι τὴν θάλασσαν ἐργάζονται, ἀπὸ μακρόθεν ἔστησαν 18 καὶ ἔκραζον βλέποντες τὸν καπνὸν τῆς πυρώσεως αὐτῆς λέγοντες· τίς ὁμοία τῇ πόλει τῇ μεγάλῃ; 19 καὶ ἔβαλον χοῦν ἐπὶ τὰς κεφαλὰς αὐτῶν καὶ ἔκραζον κλαίοντες καὶ πενθοῦντες λέγοντες·

οὐαὶ οὐαὶ, ἡ πόλις ἡ μεγάλη, ἐν ἧ ἔπλούτεσαν πάντες οἱ ἔχοντες τὰ πλοῖα ἐν τῇ θαλάσῃ ἐκ τῆς τιμιότητος αὐτῆς,

ὅτι μιᾶ ὥρᾳ ἡρημώθη.

20 Εὐφραίνου ἐπ' αὐτῇ, οὐρανὲ

καὶ οἱ ἅγιοι καὶ οἱ ἀπόστολοι καὶ οἱ προφῆται,

ὅτι ἔκρινεν ὁ θεὸς τὸ κρίμα ὑμῶν ἐξ αὐτῆς.

21 Καὶ ἦρεν εἷς ἄγγελος ἰσχυρὸς λίθον ὡς μύλινον μέγαν καὶ ἔβαλεν εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν λέγων·

οὕτως ὁρμήματι β λ η θ ή σ ε τ α ι

de ti, y nunca más las hallarán.

15 Los mercaderes de estas cosas que se enriquecieron a costa de ella, se pararán lejos a causa del temor de su tormento, llorando y lamentándose, 16 diciendo:

“¡Ay, ay, la gran ciudad, que estaba vestida de lino fino, púrpura y escarlata, y adornada de oro, piedras preciosas y perlas!,

17 porque en una hora ha sido arrasada tanta riqueza.”

Y todos los capitanes, pasajeros y marineros, y todos los que viven del mar, se pararon a lo lejos, 18 y al ver el humo de su incendio gritaban, diciendo: “¿Qué ciudad es semejante a la gran ciudad?” 19 Y echaron polvo sobre sus cabezas, y gritaban, llorando y lamentándose, diciendo:

“¡Ay, ay, la gran ciudad en la cual todos los que tenían naves en el mar se enriquecieron a costa de sus riquezas!,

porque en una hora ha sido asolada.”

20 Regocíjate sobre ella, cielo, y también vosotros, santos, apóstoles y profetas, porque Dios ha pronunciado juicio por vosotros contra ella.

21 Entonces un ángel poderoso tomó una piedra, como una gran piedra de molino, y la arrojó al mar, diciendo:

Así será derribada con violencia Babilonia, la gran ciudad, y nunca más será hallada.

22 Y el sonido de arpistas, de músicos, de flautistas y de trompeteros no se oírás más en ti;

artífice de oficio alguno

mourning aloud,

16 “Alas, alas, the great city, clothed in fine linen, in purple and scarlet, adorned with gold, with jewels, and with pearls!

17 For in one hour all this wealth has been laid waste!”

And all shipmasters and seafarers, sailors and all whose trade is on the sea, stood far off 18 and cried out as they saw the smoke of her burning, “What city was like the great city?” 19 And they threw dust on their heads, as they wept and mourned, crying out,

“Alas, alas, the great city, where all who had ships at sea grew rich by her wealth!

For in one hour she has been laid waste.”

20 Rejoice over her, O heaven, you saints and apostles and prophets!

For God has given judgment for you against her.

21 Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying,

“With such violence Babylon the great city will be thrown down,

and will be found no more; 22 and the sound of harpists and minstrels and of flutists and trumpeters will be heard in you no more;

and an artisan of any trade will be found in you no more;

and the sound of the millstone will be heard in you no more;

23 and the light of a lamp will shine in you no more;

and the voice of bridegroom and bride will be heard in you no more;

for your merchants were

they cry.

“The luxuries and splendor that you prized so much will never be yours again.

They are gone forever.”

15 The merchants who became wealthy by selling her these things will stand at a distance, terrified by her great torment. They will weep and cry.

16 “How terrible, how terrible for that great city!

She was so beautiful -- like a woman clothed in finest purple and scarlet linens, decked out with gold and precious stones and pearls!

17 And in one single moment all the wealth of the city is gone!”

And all the shipowners and captains of the merchant ships and their crews will stand at a distance. 18 They will weep as they watch the smoke ascend, and they will say, “Where in all the world is there another city like this?” 19 And they will throw dust on their heads to show their great sorrow. And they will say,

“How terrible, how terrible for the great city! She made us all rich from her great wealth.

And now in a single hour it is all gone.”

20 But you, O heaven, rejoice over her fate.

And you also rejoice, O holy people of God and apostles and prophets!

For at last God has judged her on your behalf.

21 Then a mighty angel picked up a boulder as large as a great millstone. He threw it into the ocean and shouted,

	Βαβυλῶν ἡ μεγάλη πόλις καὶ οὐ μὴ εὐρεθῆ ἔτι.	no se hallará más en ti; ruido de molino no se oirá más en ti;	the magnates of the earth, and all nations were deceived by your sorcery.	“Babylon, the great city, will be thrown down as violently as I have thrown away this stone,
22	καὶ φωνῆ κιθαρῳδῶν καὶ μουσικῶν καὶ αὐλητῶν καὶ σαλπιστῶν οὐ μὴ ἀκουσθῆ ἔν σοι ἔτι, καὶ πᾶς τεχνίτης πάσης τέχνης οὐ μὴ εὐρεθῆ ἔν σοι ἔτι, καὶ φωνῆ μύλου οὐ μὴ ἀκουσθῆ ἔν σοι ἔτι,	23 luz de lámpara no alumbrará más en ti; y la voz del novio y de la novia no se oirá más en ti; porque tus mercaderes eran los grandes de la tierra, pues todas las naciones fueron engañadas por tus hechicerías.	24 And in you was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all who have been slaughtered on earth.”	and she will disappear forever.
23	καὶ φῶς λύχνου οὐ μὴ φάνη ἔν σοι ἔτι, καὶ φωνῆ νυμφίου καὶ νύμφης οὐ μὴ ἀκουσθῆ ἔν σοι ἔτι· ὅτι οἱ ἔμποροί σου ἦσαν οἱ μεγιστᾶνες τῆς γῆς, ὅτι ἔν τῇ φαρμακείᾳ σου ἐπλανήθησαν πάντα τὰ ἔθνη,	24 Y en ella fue hallada la sangre de los profetas, de los santos y de todos los que habían sido muertos sobre la tierra.		22 Never again will the sound of music be heard there -- no more harps, songs, flutes, or trumpets. There will be no industry of any kind, and no more milling of grain.
24	καὶ ἔν αὐτῇ αἷμα προφητῶν καὶ ἁγίων εὐρέθη καὶ πάντων τῶν ἐσφαγμένων ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς.			23 Her nights will be dark, without a single lamp. There will be no happy voices of brides and grooms. This will happen because her merchants, who were the greatest in the world, deceived the nations with her sorceries.
				24 In her streets the blood of the prophets was spilled. She was the one who slaughtered God’s people all over the world.”

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## INTRODUCTION

The celebration and mourning over Babylon continues in the second half of chapter eighteen. And the complexity of the structuring of the text from a literary standpoint continues as well. One is sorely tempted to adopt a source critical view point with the assumption that in the subsequent revisions of the text that John did with whoever was helping him in the writing of this document, when he came to chapter eighteen, he remembered additional material from his apocalyptic vision and decided to simply add it without bothering to create a clear narrative structure for the speech material. The final product creates a somewhat disjointed sequence of mostly speech material without much interconnection with one another. But his concern would have been to get the contents of his vision on the table regardless of how disjointed it might appear to be to modern western readers. This simply because the religious content of the material was his number one

priority.

In spite of the challenges of this material, its message is pretty clear: an alliance with evil will put you behind the eight ball in the final analysis and leave you mourning its loss at the end.

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

The background issues for this text play a hugely important role in uncovering the meaning of the text. But as is often the case, the literary aspects loom more significantly over the interpretive process.

#### Historical Aspects:

The apocalyptic visionary nature of this text minimizes the historical aspects primary to the external history of the Transmission History perspective.

**External History.** In the history of the hand copying of this passage (= Transmission History), three places surface -- vv. 12, 17, 22 -- where the editors of

The Greek New Testament (UBS 4th rev. ed) considered the variation in wording sufficiently important as to potentially impact the translation of the passage. This of course doesn't imply that these are the only places where variations surface. But for the editors of this widely used printed Greek text these stand as the most important variations.



**V. 12, ξύλου, of wood, {A}.**<sup>1</sup> Because a reference to wood seemed out of place in a listing of very expensive products several copyists substituted λίθου, of costly stone, in place of expensive wood.<sup>2</sup> But the evidence is overwhelmingly in favor of ξύλου.

**V. 17, ὁ ἐπὶ τόπον πλέων, he who for [any] place sails, {B}.**<sup>3</sup> The very unusual phrase τόπον πλέων, a place of seas, led several copyists to 'smooth' it out with more natural Greek expressions.<sup>4</sup> Although not quite

<sup>1</sup>{A} ξύλου κ C 051 205 209 1611 1854 2030 (2053 2062 omit ἐκ) 2329 Byz [P 046] it<sup>gig</sup> syr<sup>ph, h</sup> cop<sup>sa, (bo)</sup> arm (eth<sup>mss</sup>) Hippolytus Andrew; Primasius Beatus // λίθου A 1006 1841 it<sup>ar</sup> vg (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).]

<sup>2</sup>“To the copyists of several manuscripts the mention of objects made of wood did not seem to be consistent with the materials that followed (bronze, iron, and marble), and therefore they substituted λίθου (of stone) for ξύλου.” [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), 545.]

<sup>3</sup>{B} ὁ ἐπὶ τόπον πλέων A C 1006 (1611 omit ὁ) 1841 1854 2030 Byz it<sup>ar</sup> vg<sup>ww, st</sup> arm // ὁ ἐπὶ τὸν τόπον πλέων κ 046 0229 2329 it<sup>gig</sup> vg<sup>ms</sup> // ὁ ἐπὶ τόνπον πλέων 2254 vg<sup>cl</sup> cop<sup>bo</sup> Caesarius Primasius // ὁ ἐπὶ τὸν ποταμὸν πλέων 2053 2062 (cop<sup>sa</sup>) // ἐπὶ τῶν πλοίων πλέων P 051 205 209 (Hippolytus) Andrew; 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).]

<sup>4</sup>“The reading in the text has strong manuscript support. The unusual expression with τόπον (though one similar to it occurs in Acts 27:2) led copyists to substitute one or another interpretation, as (a) ἐπὶ τῶν πλοίων πλέων (in boats sailing), (b) ὁ ἐπὶ πόντον πλέων (he who sails the open sea), (c) ὁ ἐπὶ τῶν πλοίων ἐπὶ τόπον πλέων (he who on boats for [any] place sails), (d) ὁ ἐπὶ τὸν ποταμὸν πλέων (he who sails the river), (e) “those who sail from a distance,” and (f) ἐπὶ τῶν πλοίων ὁ ὄμιλος (upon the boats the crowd), which passed into the Textus Receptus (“the company in ships” AV). The exact meaning of this unusual expression in the text is uncertain. Some understand it to have the general meaning ‘seafarers’ (NRSV), ‘voyagers’ (REB), ‘all who travel by ship’ (NIV), or more specifically ‘passengers’ (TEV and FC). Some translate as ‘coastal traveler (who travels from place to place).’ Still others understand this to mean ‘merchants who travel with their goods.’” [Roger L. Omanson and Bruce Manning Metzger, *A Textual Guide*

with the amount of evidence as in v. 12, the adopted reading still contains the greatest amount of evidence in its favor.

**V. 22, καὶ πᾶς τεχνίτης πάσης τέχνης, and every craftsman of any craft, {B}.**<sup>5</sup> Some copyists accidentally drop πάσης τέχνης, every craftsman, leaving a gap in the phrase rendering it hard to understand.<sup>6</sup> But again the bulk of evidence favors the inclusion of the reference.

When seeking to trace a complete listing of variations found in all the extant copies of this passage in the hand copied manuscripts the Text Apparatus of the *Novum Testamentum Graece* (N-A 28th rev ed) provides a listing closer to being a full listing. In vv. 12-24, some 45 places where variations of readings in the manuscripts surface.<sup>7</sup>



*to the Greek New Testament: An Adaptation of Bruce M. Metzger's Textual Commentary for the Needs of Translators* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006), 546.]

<sup>5</sup>{B} καὶ πᾶς τεχνίτης πάσης τέχνης C 051 (205 209 omit οὐ μὴ ἀκουσθῆ ἔν σοι ἔτι) 1006 1611 1841 1854 2062 (2329 τέχνης for τέχνης) 2344 Byz [P 046] it<sup>(ar), gis</sup> vg syr<sup>h</sup> with \* cop<sup>sa</sup> (eth Hippolytus<sup>lav</sup>, but omit καὶ φωνή ... third ἔτι) Andrew; Primasius Beatus // καὶ πᾶς τεχνίτης καὶ πάσης τέχνης 2053 vgmss (eth<sup>mss</sup>) // καὶ πᾶς τεχνίτης (κ, but omit καὶ φωνή μύλου ... third ἔτι) A cop<sup>bo</sup> (eth) (Hippolytus<sup>slav</sup>) // omit καὶ πᾶς ... third ἔτι syr<sup>ph</sup> arm (Hippolytus<sup>gr</sup>)

[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).]

<sup>6</sup> “The absence of πάσης τέχνης in a few witnesses is probably accidental. The words are adequately attested in a variety of witnesses and are in agreement with the author's style, but would not likely have been added by copyists. The addition of καὶ before πάσης in a few witnesses is probably a mistake in copying caused by the repeated use of καὶ in the first half of the verse. Because of homoeoteleuton, several witnesses accidentally omit one or another of the clauses that end in ἐν σοι; ἔτι.

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.]

<sup>7</sup>  
\* κλαυσονται κ A 2053. 2062 (κλαύσουσιν is replaced with alternative readings)

\* αυτην P 051. 1854 sy<sup>ph</sup> (αὐτήν is inserted after κλαύσουσιν)

\* αὐτῆ A 1006. 1611. 1841. 2053. 2062. 2329 M<sup>A</sup> (αὐτήν is replaced)

\* κ\*; Bea (καὶ στρηνιάσαντες is omitted)

\*1 ιδωσιν κ (βλέπωσιν is replaced)

\*2 πτωσεως κ\* (πυρώσεως is replaced)

**10**

\* μιαν ωραν A 1006. 1611. 2053. 2062 (μῆ ὥρα is replaced)

‡ εν μια ωρα 2329

° A (ἦλθεν is omitted)

**11**  
 \* κλαυσουσιν και πενθησουσιν 046. 2030. 2329 *M<sup>k</sup>* ar vg co (κλαίουσιν και πενθοῦσιν are replaced)  
 \* εν αυτη A 2329 (ἐπ' αὐτήν is replaced)  
 | επ αυτη 1006. 1611. 1841vid. 2030. 2053 *M<sup>k</sup>*  
 | εφ (ε)αυτους 051 *M<sup>A</sup>*  
 | επ αυτους 046  
 | σε 2062  
 | txt & C P 1854 latt

**12**  
 \* χρυσον και αργυρον και λιθους τιμιους C P (χρυσοῦ και ἀργύρου και λίθου τιμίου is replaced)  
 \* μαργαριτας C P (alternative spellings for μαργαριτῶν)  
 | μαργαριτας A vgst; Bea  
 | μαργαριτου 046. 051. 1854. 2030. 2053. 2062. 2329. 2344 *M* ar vg<sup>sw</sup>  
 | txt & 1006. 1611. 1841 gig sy; Prim  
 \* βυσσινων & (alternative spellings for βυσσίνου)  
 | βυσσου 051. 1854 *M<sup>A</sup>* ar vg sy; Bea  
 \* και πορφυρου 046. 051. 2030 *M* (και πορφύρας is either omitted or replaced)  
 | - A  
 | txt & C P 1006. 1611. 1841. 1854. 2053. 2062. 2329  
 \*<sup>1</sup> λιθου A 1006. 1841 ar vg (ξύλου is replaced)  
 \* & (και μαρμάρου is omitted)

**13**  
 \* κινναμωμου & 046. 1854. 2053. 2062 *M<sup>k</sup>* (κιννάμωμον is replaced)  
 \* &<sup>2</sup> 046. 1006. 1841. 2030. 2053. 2062 *M<sup>k</sup>* vgl sy<sup>ph</sup>; Prim (και ἄμωμον is omitted)  
 \* 1 2 5 6 046. 2030 (και λίβανον και οἶνον και ἔλαιον is either re-sequenced or omitted)  
 | - 1611

**14**  
 \* 2-5 1 046. 051. 2030. 2053. 2062. 2344 *M* it vgl sy<sup>h</sup> (σου τῆς ἐπιθυμίας τῆς ψυχῆς is sequenced differently)  
 | 2-5 1611. 2329 bo  
 | txt & A C P 1006. 1841. 1854 vgst (sy<sup>ph</sup>)  
 \* απωλοντο & lat (ἀπόλετο is replaced)  
 | απηλθεν 051. 1854. (2329) *M<sup>A</sup>* (ar) syr<sup>h</sup>  
 \* αυτα (αυτην 2062) ου μη ευρησουσιν C P 1611. 2053. 2062 syph (vg co) (οὐ μὴ αὐτὰ εὐρήσουσιν is replaced)  
 | αυτα ου μη ευρης 046. 1854. 2030. 2329*M<sup>k</sup>*; Bea  
 | ου μη αυτα ευρης 1006. 1841; Hipp (Prim)  
 | ου μη ευρησεις αυτα 051 *M<sup>A</sup>*  
 | txt & A

**15**  
 \* και 046. 2030 *M<sup>k</sup>* sy<sup>h</sup> (και is inserted before λέγοντες)

**16**  
 \* και λεγοντες 2030. 2053. 2062. 2329 ar vg sy<sup>ph</sup>; Prim Bea (λέγοντες is replaced or omitted)  
 | λεγουσιν 046  
 | - 051  
 ° 046. 2030 *M<sup>k</sup>* (2nd οὐαί is omitted)  
 \* βυσσον 046. 2030 *M<sup>k</sup>* ar vgl sy (βύσσινον is replaced)  
 \*<sup>1</sup> πορφυραν P (πορφυροῦν is replaced)  
 °<sup>1</sup> A P 046. 1006. 1841. 1854. 2030. 2053. 2062. 2329 *M<sup>k</sup>* latt (ἐν is omitted)  
 | txt & C 051. 0229. 1611 *M<sup>A</sup>*  
 \*<sup>2</sup> χρυσω & P 051. 0229. 1611. 2053. 2062. 2329 *M<sup>A</sup>* (χρυσίω is replaced)

\*<sup>3</sup> μαργαριτας 046. 051. 1854. 2030. 2344 *M* lat syph bom (μαργαρίτη is replaced)  
 | txt & A C P 0229. 1006. 1611. 1841. 2053. 2062. 2329 syh; Prim

**17**  
 ° P 051. 1611 *M<sup>A</sup>*; Hipp (ὁ is omitted)  
 \* τον τοπον & 046. 0229. 2329 gig (τόπον is replaced)  
 | τον ποταμον 2053. 2062 (sa bo)  
 | των πλοιων P 051 *M<sup>A</sup>*; Hipp Bea  
 | txt A C 1006. 1611. 1841. 1854. 2030 pm lat

**18**  
 \* εκραξαν A C P 051\*. 1006. 1611. 1841. 2329 (ἐκράζον is replaced)  
 \* τοπον A 1611 ar vg sy<sup>hmg</sup> (καπνὸν is replaced)  
 | πονον 2053. 2062  
 \* ταυτη C 2329 latt sy<sup>h</sup> co (ταυτη is inserted before τῆ μεγάλη)

**19**  
 \* εβαλλον P (ἐβαλον is replaced)  
 | επεβαλον A  
 | επεβαλλον 1006. 1841  
 \* της κεφαλης & 2053. 2062 bo (τὰς κεφαλὰς is replaced)  
 \* εκραξαν A C 051\*. 2329 (ἐκράζον is replaced)  
 | εκλαυσαν 1611. 1854  
 \* πενθουντες 1611 (κλαίοντες και πενθοῦντες is replace or omitted)  
 | - A  
 \* και P 046. 051. 1611. 2030. 2329. 2344 *M* gig vg<sup>mss</sup> sy (και is inserted before λέγοντες)  
 | txt & A C 1006. 1841. (1854). 2053. 2062 vg; Prim  
 ° & 1006. 1841. 1854 bo (οὐαί is omitted)  
 °<sup>1</sup> 051. 1854. 2053 *M<sup>A</sup>* (τὰ is omitted)

**20**  
 \* επ αυτην P 051 *M<sup>A</sup>* (ἐπ' αὐτῇ is replaced)  
 | εν αυτη A 2030  
 \* C 051. 2329 *M<sup>A</sup>* ar gig vg<sup>cl</sup> (και οι is omitted)

**21**  
 \* ισχυρον (&\*) 1854. 2053<sup>txt</sup>. 2062<sup>txt</sup> (ισχυρὸς is replaced)  
 | - A  
 \* λιθον & (μύλινον is replaced)  
 | μυλον P 046. 051. 1006. 1611. 1841. 1854. 2030. 2329. 2344 *M* gig; Prim  
 | μυλικον C  
 | txt A 2053. 2062  
 \*εν αυτη & 046 (ἐν αὐτῇ is inserted after ἔτι)

**22**  
 ° & 2329 (1st και is omitted)  
 \* σαλπιγγων & 1611. 1854. 2329 sy<sup>h</sup> (co) (σαλπιστῶν is replaced)  
 \* και πασης τεχνης 2053 (πάσης τέχνης is replaced)  
 | - & A  
 \* & syr<sup>h</sup> bo (και φωνῆ μύλου οὐ μὴ ἀκουσθῆ ἐν σοι ἔτι is omitted)

**23**  
 \* φωνη C 2329 sy<sup>ph,hmg</sup> (φωνῆ is inserted before νύμφης)  
 ° 2030 *M<sup>k</sup>* co (1st ὅτι is omitted)  
 °<sup>1</sup> A 1006. 1841 (οἱ is omitted)

**24**  
 \* αιματα 046c. 051. 1006. 1841. 1854. 2030. 2344 *M* (αἷμα is replaced)  
 | txt & A C P 046\*. 1611. 2053. 2062. 2329 latt sy co

What becomes clear from examining these variations is that copyists had trouble copying lists of items. A good percentage of the variations represent careless copying where items were overlooked from the text they were using to copy with. A few variations appear to be stylistic improvements in order to bring the language of the text up to date with natural patterns of expression in their day. One important aspect to remember is that the vast majority of these places of variations are found in isolated manuscripts usually very late and thus represent minimal evidence for text determination.

We can exegete the adopted reading of this passage in full confidence that it represented the original wording of the passage.

**Internal History.** The historical allusions in the passage, e.g., to merchants (v. 15ff), are best treated in the exegesis since the sociological issues with rigid class strata in first century culture does not play a significant role in this text.

### Literary Aspects:

Here close attention needs to be paid to the literary aspects since they play an important role in understanding this passage.

**Genre:** This passage continues the apocalyptic vision and thus places its readers into an apocalyptic scenario with sequence of events, and thus should not be understood as historical narrative. It continues the series of speeches begun in chapter eighteen proclaiming the downfall of the city of Babylon as a code reference to the city of Rome.

The subunits of vv. 9-20 and vv. 21-24 represent two distinct literary forms found often in the OT prophetic writings. **Vv. 9-20** represents a second part of the ritual lament found first in vv. 1-3. But this time the lament comes from the heavenly voice (v. 4) and not from the other angel (v. 1). It, even more than vv. 1-3, develops taunting tones in the manner of many of the prophets, such as Ezekiel regarding Tiro in Ezek. 26:15-8 and 27:1-8, 26-36. Additionally this lament in vv. 9-20 presents 'laments' from three different groups: the kings of the earth (vv. 9-10; cf. Ezek. 26:15-18); the merchants of the earth (vv. 15-17a; cf. Ezek. 27:12-24); and the sea captains (vv. 17b-19; cf. Ezek. 27:29b-36).

Four structural elements are developed in each of the three 'laments' in vv. 9-10, 15-17a, 17b-19:<sup>8</sup> a)

*paratus Criticus*, ed. Barbara Aland et al., 28. revidierte Auflage. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012), 775-778.]

<sup>8</sup>Each of these three brief threnodies (vv 9-10, 15-17a, 17b-19) consists of four stereotyped elements: (1) Each group is said to 'stand afar off' (v 10, ἀπό μακρόθεν ἐστήκότες, 'standing far off'; v 15, ἀπό μακρόθεν στήσονται, 'will stand far off'; and v 17, ἀπό μακρόθεν ἔστησαν, 'stand far off'). Note how the author achieves variety of expression only by varying the form of the verb. (2) Each group is described as weeping and wailing or mourning; kings: κλαύσουσιν καὶ κώπουνται, 'will weep and wail'

Each group is said to 'stand afar off'; b) Each group is said to be weeping and wailing or mourning; c) Each lament begins with a doubled οὐαὶ οὐαὶ, Alas! Alas!; d) Each lament concludes with the formula ὅτι μιᾷ ὥρᾳ, 'for in one hour,' stressing the suddenness of Babylon's fall. Thus not only the structural formation of a prophetic taunting lament is important but how they functioned for the prophet in getting out God's message is significant to interpreting the text here.

Then in vv. 21-24 the symbolic action of the angel throwing a huge stone into the sea has a substantial background in the lives of the prophets in the OT, e.g., 1 Kgs 22:11; 2 Kgs 13:14-19; Isa 7:10-17; 8:1-4; 20:2-6; Jer 19:1-5; 28:10-11; 32:6-44; Ezek 4:1-3, 4-8, 9-17; 5:1-17. Two of the three standard genre elements in such OT actions are present here: the report of a symbolic action (v. 21a) and then an interpretation of the meaning of that action (vv. 21b-23). Only the command of Yahweh to the prophet is missing but here it is an angel rather than a prophet doing this.<sup>9</sup> Clear echoes here of (v 9a); merchants: κλαίουσιν καὶ πενθοῦσιν, 'weep and mourn' (v 11a); κλαίοντες καὶ πενθοῦντες, 'weeping and mourning' (v 15b); sea captains and sailors: κλαίοντες καὶ πενθοῦντες, 'weeping and mourning' (v 19a). (3) Each lament begins with the formula οὐαὶ οὐαὶ, 'Alas! alas!' (vv 10, 16, 19). (4) Each lament concludes with the formula ὅτι μιᾷ ὥρᾳ, 'for in one hour,' characterizing the suddenness of Babylon's fall (vv 10b, 17a, 19b). While these three laments are in part modeled after Ezek 26-28, there are also a number of other features in Rev 18:9-20 that have been adapted from other ritual laments in the OT and perhaps even from the laments used in the Greek world. Two formulas characterize the lament in the OT: (1) They often begin with the term אֵיךְ 'ēk or אֵכָה 'ēkā, 'alas! how!' (e.g., 2 Sam 1:19, 25, 27; Ezek 26:17; Lam 1:1; 2:1; 4:1; all translated by πῶς in the LXX). (2) They often contain imperative forms of verbs meaning 'to weep, mourn.' The Hebrew terms for this mocking adaptation of the lament are לְשֹׁן מַאֲסָ'āl, 'taunt song' (Isa 14:4), and קִינָה qīnā, 'lament' (Ezek 27:2; 28:12; 32:2, 16). The Greek tradition of poetic laments for cities or nations follows slightly different conventions. They characteristically begin with a rhetorical question introduced by the interrogative adverb ποῦ, 'where?' in the first line of a stanza, with the answer provided in the last line of the stanza, e.g., the epigram of Antipater of Sidon (Pal. Anth. 9.151; LCL tr.) [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 978-979.]

<sup>9</sup>An angel then throws a millstone into the sea, an action symbolizing the downfall of 'Babylon' (vv 21-24). Fohrer (*Handlungen*, 17) enumerates thirty-two examples of symbolic prophetic actions in the OT (e.g., 1 Kgs 22:11; 2 Kgs 13:14-19; Isa 7:10-17; 8:1-4; 20:2-6; Jer 19:1-5; 28:10-11; 32:6-44; Ezek 4:1-3, 4-8, 9-17; 5:1-17). The angel's action here contains two of the three elements typical of the 'reports of prophetic symbolic actions' found in OT prophets (see Fohrer, ZAW 64 [1952] 101-20; id., *Handlungen*, 17-19, 20-71): (1) a report of a symbolic act performed by a prophet (v 21a) and (2) an interpretation of the prophetic action (vv 21b-23). The element that normally occurs first in the OT examples of such symbolic prophetic acts, the command of Yahweh, is missing. The first element in v 21a is unlike OT symbolic prophetic acts in that here in the setting of apocalyptic prophecy an angel,

Jer. 51:63-64 where Jeremiah is told by God to throw a stone into the Euphrates and thus symbolize the downfall of Babylon. Such actions by the OT prophets provided them a 'visual aid' symbol of the central point of their preaching in their time. It reinforced strongly what God had given them to say to their audience. The same impact is achieved here in this action by the angel in the vision presented by John.

rather than a prophet, performs the action, which John has modeled after a similar action reported in Jer 51:63-64, where Jeremiah is told to throw a stone into the Euphrates, symbolizing Babylon who will sink to rise no more. The second element in vv 21b-23 is unlike typical OT symbolic acts in that the author has used the interpretation as a basis for a series of plaintive vignettes of city life that are gone forever. This text unit is composed with extreme care. The statement that Babylon exists no longer (καὶ οὐ μὴ εὑρεθῆ ἔτι) in v 21c is used as the basis for vv 22-23b, which contain five couplets in which the first line refers to a typical feature of urban life and the second has the stereotypical phrase οὐ μὴ ... ἐν σοὶ ἔτι, 'will never be [heard, found, seen] in you again.' Babylon is referred to in the third person by the angel in v 21. After addressing Babylon directly in the second person singular in vv 22-23 (cf. v 14), the author resumes the third person again, referring to Babylon with the pronoun αὐτῆς, 'her,' in v 24. This inclusio is further marked by the use of the verb εὑρεθῆναι, 'be found,' in both v 21 and v 24, though with two different meanings." [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 982-983.]

**Literary Setting:** Establishing the literary context for vv. 9-24 is relatively easy. But the greatest challenge is sorting out the subunits of this material. The first angel speaks in vv. 1-3. Then a heavenly voice speaks in vv. 4-20. But what is said by God here falls into two distinct groups of vv. 4-8 and 9-20. The latter unit displays substantial tones and structures to the first angel's speech in vv. 1-3. Thus vv. 4-8 seem almost as an interruption to the speech begun in vv. 1-3. But in the clear narrative structuring here vv. 9-20 come from the different heavenly voice rather than the 'other angel.' A third personage surfaces in vv. 21-24 called εἷς ἄγγελος ἰσχυρὸς, **one mighty angel**. His casting of the stone into the sea (τὴν θάλασσαν) symbolizes the coming downfall of Babylon as Rome and is followed by his interpreting of this action as such.

Thus chapter 18 moves forward the focus on Rome as symbolized by Babylon that begun in 16:12 with the sixth bowl of wrath. But this focus is not yet complete since 19:1-10 will climax the focus with a great celebration in heaven of her downfall.

**Literary Structure:** How all of this text comes together can be visually presented by the block diagram in a way that simplifies the understanding of it.

18.9	And	
<b>N</b>	<b>will weep</b>	
	and	
<b>O</b>	<b>will wail...the kings of the earth</b>	
	over her	who with her committed immorality
		and
		lived in luxury,
	whenever they see the smoke	of her burning,
18.10	from a distance	
	standing	
	because of the fear of her torments	
	saying:	
<b>a</b>	<b>woe, woe,</b>	
	the great city,	
	Babyon the strong city,	
	because in one hour came your judgment.	
18.11	And	
<b>P</b>	<b>the merchants of the earth will weep</b>	
	καὶ	
<b>Q</b>	--- ----- -- --- ----- <b>will mourn</b>	
	over her,	
	/-----	
	because her goods no one will buy	
		at all
18.12	goods	
	of gold	
	and	
	of silver	
	and	

of expensive stone  
and  
of pearls  
and  
of fine linen  
and  
of purple  
and  
of silk  
and  
of scarlet,  
and  
every scented wood  
and  
every ivory thing  
and  
every thing of costly wood  
and  
of bronze  
and  
of iron  
and  
of marble,  
and  
cinnamon  
and  
spice  
and  
incense  
and  
myrrh  
and  
frankincense  
and  
wine  
and  
olive oil  
and  
choice flour  
and  
wheat  
and  
cattle  
and  
sheep,  
and  
(goods)  
of horses  
and  
of charlots  
and  
of bodies (=slaves),  
and  
lives of men.

18.13

18.14

**R**

and  
***the fruit of your life's passion has departed***  
from you,  
and



**S** *all the luxuries and the splendour have been lost*  
from you  
 and  
**T** *never again will these things be found.*

from afar  
**U** 18.15 *the merchants of these things...will stand*  
 who became rich |  
 from her |  
 because of fear  
 | /-----|  
 | of her torments  
 weeping  
 | and  
 mourning  
 saying:  
**b** | *Woe, woe,*  
 | /----|  
 | the great city,  
 /-----|  
 who clothed herself with fine linen  
 | and  
 | purple  
 | and  
 | scarlet  
 | and  
 has adorned herself in gold  
 | and  
 | in precious stone  
 | and  
in pearl,
in one hour
 18.17 because...laid waste will be such wealth.

And  
**V** *every ship master*  
 and  
*every one in sailing*  
 and  
*sailors*  
 and from a distance  
*as many as work the sea...will stand*  
 18.18 and

**W** *--- --- --- --- --- will be crying*  
 seeing the smoke  
 /-----|  
 of her burning  
 saying: \_  
 /-----|

**c** *What city is comparable to the great city?*

18.19 And  
**X** *they threw dust*  
 upon their heads  
 and  
**Y** *were crying*  
 weeping  
 and  
 mourning

saying,

**d**

**Woe, woe,**

| the great city,

/-|-----|

in which grew wealthy all those having ships

| | in the sea

| out of her prosperity,

because in one hour she will be ruined.

**z**

18.20

**Rejoice**

over her,

heaven

and

saints

and

apostles

and

prophets,

because God judged the judgment for you

against her.

18.21

And

**516** **picked up one mighty angel a stone**

like a large millstone

and

**517** **threw (it)**

into the sea

saying,

thus

with violence

**AA** **shall be thrown down Babylon**

the great city

and

**AB** **never will it be found**

ever.

18.22

καὶ

**AC** **sound...will never be heard...,**

of harpists in you

and ever

of minstrels

and

of flutists

and

of trumpeters

and

**AD** **every craftsman of every trade will never be found**

in you

ever,

and

**AE** **sound of a millstone will never be heard**

in you

ever,

18.23

and

**AF** **light of a lamp will never shine**

in you

ever,

and

**AG** **voice of a bridegroom and bride will never be heard**

in you

ever;

/-----|  
because your merchants were the magnates of the earth,  
in your sorcery  
because...were deceived all the nations,

18.24

and

in her

AH

**blood...was found**

of prophets

and

of saints

and

of all those slaughtered

upon the earth.

### Summary of Rhetorical Structure:

Both the complexity and the simplicity of the structural arrangement of ideas in vv. 9-24 come through in the above diagram. The numbered statements (#s516-571, and 515 linked to lettered statements N-Z in v. 4) create a natural two fold division of the text. The sub-units inside these two units is somewhat more complex but actually well defined.

**Division one** in #515 with statements N-Z. The heavenly voice continues His speech in statements N-Z. **Statements N-O** contain a prediction of lament over the fall of Babylon from the kings of the earth. **Statements P - U** contain a depiction of the lament over Babylon from the merchants of the earth. **Statements V-Y** focus on the lament of sea faring people over the doom of Babylon. But **statement Z** calls upon the people of God to rejoice over her doom. Statements a - d contain a formula style lament with each one built off a foundational pattern for the first three groups.

**Division two** in #516-517 with statements AA-AH. The Prophetic Symbolic Action (#s 516-517) is followed by an interpretation of the act by the angel (#s AA -AH).

### Exegesis of the Text:

The twofold structure in the text provides the basic outline divisions for exegeting the passage. The additional sub divisions in each of the units further divides out the text for exegesis with appropriate contextual considerations.

#### A. The taunting lament of the heavenly voice, vv. 9-20.

Vv. 9-20 at first glance seem to be hanging without clear narrative introduction. This confusion comes in part because of the unclear paragraphing pattern of most modern English translations.

Additionally the role of Jeremiah 50-51 (LXX 27-28) on chapter eighteen is enormous. One sees it in a dozen different allusions in the chapter.<sup>10</sup> But if you

<sup>10</sup>“The depiction of the judgment of Babylon-Rome in Rev 18:2-8, 21-24 includes a number of allusions to Jer 50-51 (LXX

have been paying attention to the patterns consistently in the block diagram through chapter 17 and then compare them with what is in chapter 18 it becomes very obvious that the influence of sources for the imagery in chapter 18 are much, much heavier than anywhere up to this point in Revelation.<sup>11</sup> The patterns in chapter 18

27-28), where the focus is on the judgment of Babylon (C. Wolff, *Jeremia*, 167-69). While each of these allusions is discussed in more detail below under Comment, they are listed here in tabular form to convey the pervasive influence that Jer 50-51 has had on Rev 18:

18:2a	Jer 51:8 (LXX 28:8); Isa 21:9
18:2b	Jer 51:37 (LXX 28:37)
18:3	Jer 51:7 (LXX 28:7)
18:4	Jer 51:6 (LXX 28:6)
18:5	Jer 51:9 (LXX 28:9)
18:6	Jer 50:29 (LXX 27:29); cf. Jer 16:18
18:8	cf. Jer 50:32, 34; 51:30, 32, 58
18:20	Jer 51:48 (not in LXX)
18:21	Jer 51:64 (LXX 28:64)
18:22c-23b	Jer 25:10
18:23b	Jer 7:34; 16:9; 25:10; 33:11; cf. Bar 2:23
18:24	Jer 51:49 (LXX 28:49)”

[David E. Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, vol. 52C, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 983.]

<sup>11</sup>“There are numerous aporias and other compositional features in Rev 18 that suggest the author has incorporated an existing text into the larger context of Rev 17:1-19:10. (1) Rev 18:1-3 is an angelic speech, a form that occurs nine times in Revelation (see the discussion above under *II. Literary Analysis and Form/Structure/Setting on Rev 7*) but rarely elsewhere in apocalyptic literature. That this literary form occurs so frequently in Revelation and rarely elsewhere indicates that 18:1-3 was certainly composed by the author-editor of Revelation as an introduction to 18:4-24 as well as a link to 17:1-18. (2) Rev 18:12-13, the list of luxury trade goods that the merchants of the earth can no longer ship to Babylon-Rome, appears to be a later excursus inserted into an earlier text at this point. (3) Rev 18:14 is a fragment of a speech directed to Babylon-Rome in the style of 18:21-23 but lacks any identification of the speaker or speakers (unless one is to assume that it is spoken by the merchants), and it is not introduced with a verb of saying or speaking as are the other speeches in Rev 18 (vv 10, 16, 19, 21). This fragment deals with luxury goods (ripe fruit, expensive and beautiful trinkets) that are no longer available to the populace of Babylon-Rome. Both vv 12-13 and v 14 are framed by

are much more complex than ever before in the book.

The extensive use of the OT prophetic lament in a taunting manner especially in vv. 9-20 provides an important background for interpreting what is presented here. John's use of not only a core structure of such laments but also his extensive use of images from Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel especially in projecting the downfall of the apocalyptic Babylon from their pronouncing doom on the historical Babylon -- all of this must be considered in working through the text.

**1) Lament of the kings of the earth, vv. 9-10.**

9 Καὶ κλαύσουσιν καὶ κόψονται ἐπ' αὐτήν οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς οἱ μετ' αὐτῆς πορνεύσαντες καὶ στρηνιάσαντες, ὅταν βλέπωσιν τὸν καπνὸν τῆς πυρώσεως αὐτῆς, 10 ἀπὸ μακρόθεν ἐστηκότες διὰ τὸν φόβον τοῦ βασανισμοῦ αὐτῆς λέγοντες· οὐαὶ οὐαὶ, ἡ πόλις ἡ μεγάλη, Βαβυλῶν ἡ πόλις ἡ ἰσχυρά, ὅτι μιᾷ ὥρᾳ ἤλθεν ἡ κρίσις σου.

9 And the kings of the earth, who committed fornication and lived in luxury with her, will weep and wail over her when they see the smoke of her burning; 10 they will stand far off, in fear of her torment, and say, "Alas, alas, the great city, Babylon, the mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come."

The first lament establishes the pattern for the following ones. The voice of God in speaking from heaven to the people on earth (cf. v. 4) depicts how the kings of the earth will mourn the loss of Babylon. A depiction of the ritual lament is first presented and then followed by the verbal cries of mourning that are presented in formula patterns.

**a) The lament, vv. 9-10a.** The core declaration of κλαύσουσιν καὶ κόψονται ἐπ' αὐτήν οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς, *will be weep and wailing over her the kings of the earth*, provides the basis for expansion elements. The combination future tense verbs are placed first for emphasis. The prepositional phrase ἐπ' αὐτήν, *over her*, comes immediately after as a point of reference of the object of the grieving as Babylon. At the end of the core

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the phrases κλαίουσιν καὶ πενθοῦσιν, 'they weep and wail' (v 11a), and κλαίοντες καὶ πενθοῦντες, 'weeping and wailing' (v 15b). (4) The description of the luxurious garments and jewels of Babylon-Rome given in the lament of the merchants in v 16 is closely parallel to 17:4 and appears to have been borrowed from that context and inserted in 18:16 in order to link the two chapters. (5) Rev 18:20 and 18:24 are the only explicitly Christian features in Rev 18 and therefore appear to be later additions by the author-editor as an attempt to connect this chapter with other themes in Revelation. (6) The plaintive poetic description in vv 22-23b ends abruptly with the mention in v 23c that the merchants of Babylon were the power brokers of the world. There is no obvious relationship between this line and its context, nor is it obvious why the statement that all nations were deceived by Babylon's magic is included in v 23d." [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 984.]

main clause comes the verb subject οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς, *the kings of the earth*. This phrase is common inside Revelation: 1:5; 6:15; 17:2, 18; 18:3, 9; 19:19; 21:24. An alternative phrase with the same designation is τοὺς βασιλεῖς τῆς οἰκουμένης ὅλης, *kings of the entire inhabited world* (16:14).

From this core expression comes a series of expansion elements. First, modifying οἱ βασιλεῖς, *the kings*, is the doubled participle phrase οἱ μετ' αὐτῆς πορνεύσαντες καὶ στρηνιάσαντες, *who with her committed immorality and lived in luxury*. Here the previous assertions in 17:2 and 18:3 are picked up in clarification of just who these kings are. The corrupting influence of Babylon symbolically as a whore is the central theme of chapter 17, and will be referenced in 19:2 again as a basis for God's wrath against her. This particular reference to luxury as a lifestyle from στρηνιάω is only found here in vv. 7, 9.<sup>12</sup>

The second expansion element modifies the verbs as an adverbial indefinite temporal dependent clause: ὅταν βλέπωσιν τὸν καπνὸν τῆς πυρώσεως αὐτῆς, *whenever they see the smoke of her burning*. These kings will see here burn (cf. 18:8a) because they are the ones burning her to the ground (17:16). In hypocrisy they destroy her and then mourn her destruction. Somewhat in the background here stands prophets warnings of the destruction of different cities etc.: Jerusalem (Ezek. 23:25-29); Judah (Jer. 13:26-27; Ezek. 16:37-38; 23:10, 29; Hos. 2:5, 12); Nineveh (Nah. 3:5; cf. Isa. 3:17, 47:3; Jer. 13:22; Lam 1:8). The indefinite temporal conjunction ὅταν sets up an undefined time in the near future.

The third expansion element also modifies the verbs κλαύσουσιν καὶ κόψονται, *will be weeping and wailing*, as a circumstantial participle phrase: ἀπὸ μακρόθεν ἐστηκότες διὰ τὸν φόβον τοῦ βασανισμοῦ αὐτῆς, *from a distance standing because of the fear of her torments*. The image is vivid and is common place inside the OT as

<sup>12</sup>Inside the NT, a life of luxury is referenced by several terms as topics **88.252-88.255** in Louw, Johannes P., and Eugene Albert Nida. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*. New York: United Bible Societies, 1996, presents:

**88.252 σπαταλάω:** to indulge oneself excessively in satisfying one's own appetites and desires—'to live indulgently.'

**88.253 τρυφάω; ἐντρυφάω; τρυφή, ἥς f:** to live a life of luxury, usually associated with intemperate feasting and drinking—'to revel, to carouse, to live a life of luxury.'

**88.254 στρηνιάω; στρῆνος, ους n:** to live sensually by gratifying the senses with sexual immorality—'to live sensually, to live intemperately, lust, sensual living.'

**88.255 λαμπρῶς:** pertaining to living in ostentatious luxury—'luxuriously, with ostentation, showing off.'

[Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 768.

an expression of the horror of seeing the destruction of a city.<sup>13</sup> Interestingly, these kings who burned Rome down are now fearful of getting too close to the smoldering ruins of the city. So in ritual lament they mourn the passing of the city as though they cared for it.

The phrase ἀπὸ μακρόθεν, from a distance, is repeated in each of the three laments of the kings, merchants, and sea people: vv. 10, 15, 17. These keep their distance both here and in v. 15, διὰ τὸν φόβον τοῦ βασανισμοῦ αὐτῆς, *because of the fear of her torments*. The use of βασανισμός, torture / torment, three times (vv. 7, 10, 15) corresponds to 14:11 where the idea reaches beyond this world torment to designate eternal torment. The verb from this same stem, βασανίζω, captures the image graphically in 20:10,

καὶ ὁ διάβολος ὁ πλανῶν αὐτοὺς ἐβλήθη εἰς τὴν λίμνην τοῦ πυρὸς καὶ θείου ὄπου καὶ τὸ θηρίον καὶ ὁ ψευδοπροφήτης, καὶ *βασανισθήσονται ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων*.

And the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet were, *and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever*.

**b) The cries of lament, v. 10b.** The fourth expansion element modifying the two core verbs is λέγοντες, *saying*. This ‘modal’ participle reflects a Hebrew way of presenting the content of main clause verbs implying some kind of speaking. Here it introduces the oral lament spoken as their weeping and wailing. In crying out as a lament what does one say? In the ancient world such cries were ritual and formula in nature. They contained a lament in a non grammatical structure, here οὐαὶ οὐαὶ, *woe, woe!* The object of the lament was addressed in the vocative case with possible modifiers, here ἡ πόλις ἡ μεγάλη, Βαβυλῶν ἡ πόλις ἡ ἰσχυρά, *the great city, Babylon the mighty city*. Then general a reason for the lament is given, here ὅτι μιᾷ ὥρᾳ ἦλθεν ἡ κρίσις σου, *because in one hour has come your judgment*. The ritualistic nature is reflected that most of the words here will be repeated exactly in vv. 16 and 19. The double οὐαὶ οὐαὶ, *woe, woe!* is found only in these three ritual laments here in vv. 10, 16, 19. But οὐαὶ is also found in 8:13; 9:12; 11:14; and 12:12 as

<sup>13</sup>“This is a literary device used by the author to present an external view of the destruction of Babylon so that the readers or hearers will imaginatively view Babylon from the perspective of a series of characters that have previously profited from her existence. The reactions of those who pass by such a deserted city is a commonplace in OT prophetic texts (Jer 18:16, ‘All who pass by it are horrified and shake their heads’; cf. Jer 19:8; 49:17; 50:13; Ezek 5:14–15; 36:34; Lam 2:15; 2 Chr 7:21), though another related commonplace (not used in Revelation) is to claim that no one passes by it any more (Isa 34:10; 60:15; Jer 9:10; Ezek 14:15; 33:28; 35:7; Zeph 3:6).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 997.]

signaling great pain or distress. Revelation has 7 of the 35 uses in the NT.

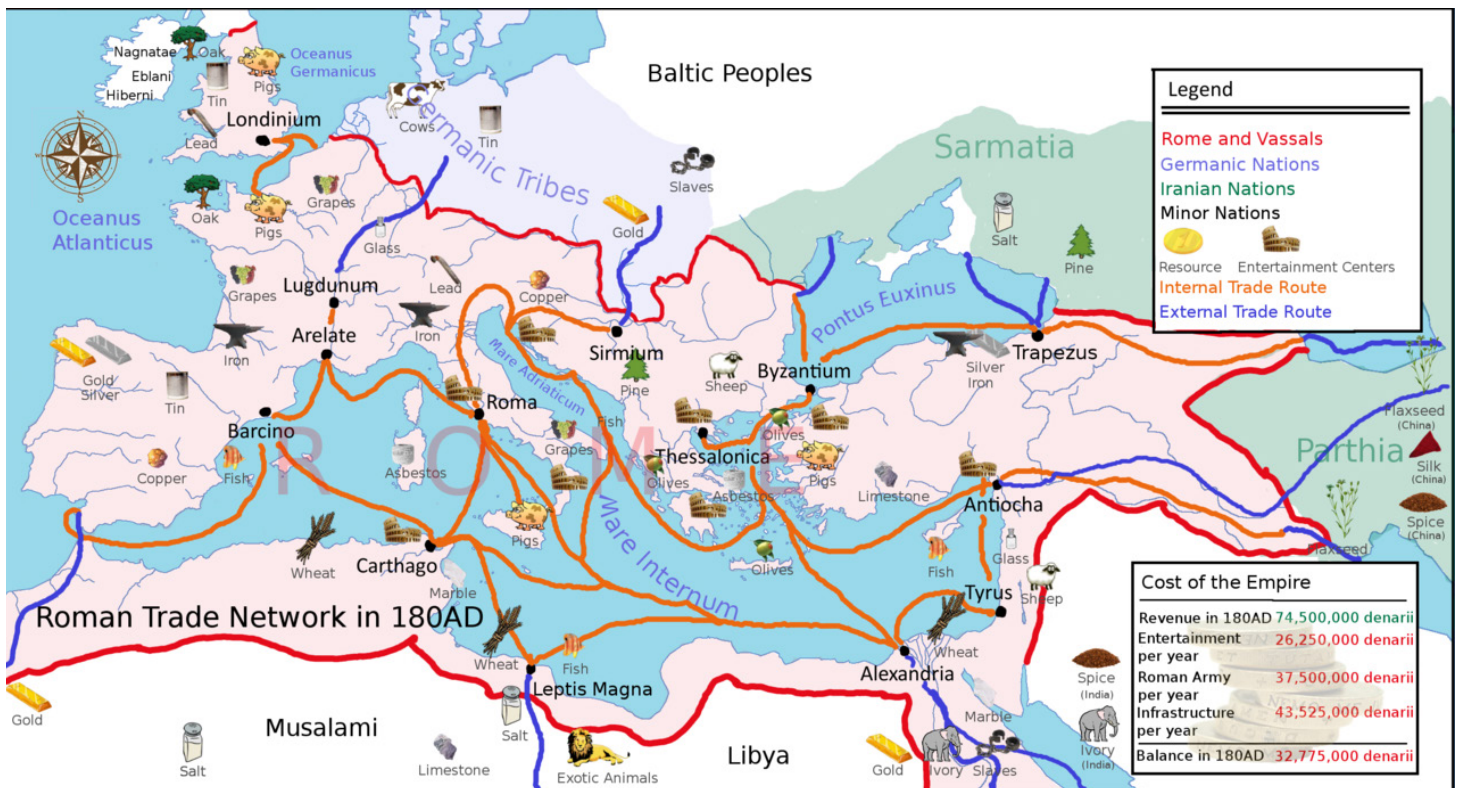
The reason for the οὐαὶ οὐαὶ, is the sudden destruction that has overtaken the city: ὅτι μιᾷ ὥρᾳ ἦλθεν ἡ κρίσις σου, *because in one hour has come your judgment*. The phrase μιᾷ ὥρᾳ, *one hour*, is repeated four times in Revelation: 17:10; 18:10, 17, 19. It has the meaning of a very short period of time with a tone of unexpectedness. It echoes reference in LXX Dan. 4:17a and the Testament of Job 7:10.<sup>14</sup> But this destruction is now defined as ἡ κρίσις σου, *your judgment*. It is more than just the kings of the earth burning the city down (17:16). It represents the judgment of God upon the city as directly stated in 17:17. How quickly and totally it happens surprises even those doing the destruction. This leads to some second thoughts on their part suspecting that something deeper is happening with this.

## 2) *Lament of the merchants of the earth, vv. 11-17a*

11 Καὶ οἱ ἔμποροι τῆς γῆς κλαίουσιν καὶ πενθοῦσιν ἐπ’ αὐτήν, ὅτι τὸν γόμον αὐτῶν οὐδεὶς ἀγοράζει οὐκέτι 12 γόμον χρυσοῦ καὶ ἀργύρου καὶ λίθου τιμίου καὶ μαργαριτῶν καὶ βυσσίνου καὶ πορφύρας καὶ σιρικοῦ καὶ κοκκίνου, καὶ πᾶν ξύλον θύϊνον καὶ πᾶν σκεῦος ἐλεφάντινον καὶ πᾶν σκεῦος ἐκ ξύλου τιμιωτάτου καὶ χαλκοῦ καὶ σιδήρου καὶ μαρμάρου, 13 καὶ κιννάμωμον καὶ ἄμωμον καὶ θυμιάματα καὶ μύρον καὶ λίβανον καὶ οἶνον καὶ ἔλαιον καὶ σεμίδαλιν καὶ σῖτον καὶ κτήνη καὶ πρόβατα, καὶ ἵππων καὶ ῥεδῶν καὶ σωματῶν, καὶ ψυχᾶς ἀνθρώπων. 14 καὶ ἡ ὀπώρα σου τῆς ἐπιθυμίας τῆς ψυχῆς ἀπῆλθεν ἀπὸ σοῦ, καὶ πάντα τὰ λιπαρὰ καὶ τὰ λαμπρὰ ἀπώλετο ἀπὸ σοῦ καὶ οὐκέτι οὐ μὴ αὐτὰ εὐρήσουσιν.

15 Οἱ ἔμποροι τούτων οἱ πλουτήσαντες ἀπ’ αὐτῆς ἀπὸ μακρόθεν στήσονται διὰ τὸν φόβον τοῦ βασανισμοῦ αὐτῆς κλαίοντες καὶ πενθοῦντες 16 λέγοντες: οὐαὶ οὐαὶ, ἡ πόλις ἡ μεγάλη, ἡ περιβεβλημένη βύσσινον καὶ πορφυροῦν καὶ κόκκινον καὶ κεχρυσωμένη [ἐν] χρυσίῳ καὶ λίθῳ

<sup>14</sup>“The phrase μιᾷ ὥρᾳ, literally ‘in one hour,’ occurs four times in Revelation (17:10; 18:10, 17, 19) and means ‘a short time’ (G. Dellling, TDNT 9:680). The phrase ἐν ὥρᾳ μιᾷ τῆς ἡμέρας occurs in LXX Dan 4:17a, with the literal meaning of one hour in the day. Probably the phrase ἐν γὰρ μιᾷ ὥρᾳ ἀπέρχομαι, ‘for in one hour I will depart’ (in T. Job 7.10 [ed. R. A. Kraft]), should be understood similarly, though usually the term is used metaphorically. The phrase is a figure of speech for an unexpectedly quick destruction, as in Josephus J.W. 3.227–28, when the Jews burn up the Roman siege machines ‘in one hour’ (ἐπὶ μιᾶς ὥρας), or in J.W. 2.457, which reports that the residents of Caesarea slaughtered the Caesarean Jews ‘in one hour’ (ὑπὸ μίαν ὥραν).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 997–998.]



τιμίῳ καὶ μαργαρίτῃ, 17 ὅτι μᾶ ὥρα ἡρημώθη ὁ τοσοῦτος πλοῦτος.

11 And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn for her, since no one buys their cargo anymore, 12 cargo of gold, silver, jewels and pearls, fine linen, purple, silk and scarlet, all kinds of scented wood, all articles of ivory, all articles of costly wood, bronze, iron, and marble, 13 cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, olive oil, choice flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, slaves—and human lives. 14 “The fruit for which your soul longed has gone from you, and all your dainties and your splendor are lost to you, never to be found again!”

15 The merchants of these wares, who gained wealth from her, will stand far off, in fear of her torment, weeping and mourning aloud, 16 “Alas, alas, the great city, clothed in fine linen, in purple and scarlet, adorned with gold, with jewels, and with pearls! 17 For in one hour all this wealth has been laid waste!”

The structure of this second lament is the same as the first one. A depiction of the lament (vv. 11-16a) is followed by the ritual lament (vv. 16b-17a) that is very similar to the first one in v. 10b. One deviation comes in v. 14 after the extra long listing of luxury goods. Here the heavenly voice pronounces officially the complete loss of all these items and the luxury they brought.

a) **The lament, vv. 11-16a.** This depiction of lament references οἱ ἔμποροι τῆς γῆς, the merchants of the earth. They were initially referenced in v. 3c by the angel, καὶ οἱ ἔμποροι τῆς γῆς ἐκ τῆς δυνάμεως τοῦ

στρήνους αὐτῆς ἐπλούτησαν, and the merchants of the earth out of the power of her luxury have grown wealthy. Clearly a negative view of merchants is present here, and reflects a generally low view of them in Greco-Roman society.<sup>15</sup>

The two core verbs in the main compound main clauses οἱ ἔμποροι τῆς γῆς κλαίουσιν καὶ πενθοῦσιν ἐπ’ αὐτήν, the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her, shift to the futuristic present tense use for greater dramatic effect.<sup>16</sup> The κλαύσουσιν καὶ κόψονται of the

<sup>15</sup>“On the relatively low social status of the ἔμπορος, ‘merchant,’ in the Greco-Roman world, see Pleket, “Urban Elites,” 131–44. In later antiquity, merchants played a very limited role in cities such as Antioch. In Libanius they ‘appear to be humble landless men who are trying to make a living out of such resources as they have’ (Liebeschuetz, Antioch, 82). On the other hand, owning a ship or a fleet of ships could be a very profitable enterprise (see Lucian Nav. 13).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 998.]

<sup>16</sup>Some copyists, however, wanted the two sets to match and thus used the future tense for both sets.

The present tense of κλαίω here and in v 9, as well as the same tense of πενθέω, has been changed to the future tense (2030 2329 M<sup>k</sup> a vg co) because of the future nature of the prophetic narrative and the future tense of κόψονται itself in v 9. The original present tenses make the scene, which the author generally depicts as occurring in the future, more vivid (see on 7:16–17 for other reasons John may mix present with future tenses).

[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), 909.]

kings of the earth (v. 9) now becomes the κλαίουσιν καὶ πενθοῦσιν of the merchants. κόπονται is very close in meaning to πενθοῦσιν in the sense of making verbal sounds of great anguish while crying intensely.

The exceeding long causal ὅτι clause in vv. 11b-13 represents the single expansion element modifying the two core verb. The reason for their grieving over the downfall of Babylon is that she won't be able to buy their goods (τὸν γόμον αὐτῶν) any longer. The term γόμος designates freight that is hauled either by land or by sea. Essentially it is the merchandise that is brought into Rome for sale to the residents of the city. But the Romans were excellent [traders](#) themselves.<sup>17</sup> Thus the merchants in view here by John would have included Roman citizens from the city as well as others who made their homes elsewhere in the empire.

The bulk of this long causal dependent clause is a [listing of luxury items](#) that will no longer be traded once Rome is destroyed. These are grouped into related items.

- 1) χρυσοῦ καὶ ἀργύρου καὶ λίθου τιμίου καὶ μαργαριτῶν, of gold and silver and precious stone and pearls.
- 2) βυσσίνου καὶ πορφύρας καὶ σιρικοῦ καὶ κοκκίνου, of fine linen, of purple, of silk and of scarlet.
- 3) καὶ πᾶν ξύλον θύϊνον καὶ πᾶν σκεῦος ἐλεφάντινον, and every article of scented wood and every article of ivory.
- 4) καὶ πᾶν σκεῦος ἐκ ξύλου τιμιωτάτου καὶ χαλκοῦ καὶ σιδήρου καὶ μαρμάρου, and every article of costly wood and of bronze, and of iron, and of marble.
- 5) καὶ κιννάμωμον καὶ ἄμωμον καὶ θυμιάματα καὶ μύρον καὶ λίβανον, and cinnamon, and spice and

17 “The Romans knew two types of businessmen, the *negotiatores* and the *mercatores*. The *negotiatores* were in part bankers because they lent money on interest. They also bought and sold staples in bulk or did commerce in wholesale quantities of goods. In some instances the *argentarii* are considered as a subset of the *negotiatores* and in others as a group apart. The *argentarii* acted as agents in public or private auctions, kept deposits of money for individuals, cashed cheques (*prescriptio*) and served as money-changers. They kept strict books, or *tabulae*, which were considered as legal proof by the courts. The *argentarii* sometimes did the same kind of work as the *mensarii*, who were public bankers appointed by the state. The *mercatores* were usually plebeians or freedmen. They were present in all the open-air markets or covered shops, manning stalls or hawking goods by the side of the road. They were also present near Roman military camps during campaigns, where they sold food and clothing to the soldiers and paid cash for any booty coming from military activities.

“There is some information on the economy of Roman Palestine from Jewish sources of around the 3rd century AD. Itinerant peddlars (*rochel*) took spices and perfumes to the rural population.<sup>[2]</sup> This suggests that the economic benefits of the Empire did reach, at least, the upper levels of the peasantry.”

[“Roman Commerce,” [wikipedia.org](http://wikipedia.org)]

incense and myrrh and frankincense.

- 6) καὶ οἶνον καὶ ἔλαιον καὶ σεμίδαλιν καὶ σῖτον, and wine and olive oil and choice flour and wheat.
- 7) καὶ κτήνη καὶ πρόβατα, and cattle and sheep,
- 8) καὶ ἵππων καὶ ρεδῶν καὶ σωματῶν, and of horses and of chariots and of slaves
- 9) καὶ ψυχὰς ἀνθρώπων, and the lives of men.

One should note that these are luxury items and not what peasants or low level middle class would be buying in a market place.<sup>18</sup> The topos of a world market stands in the background of this listing.<sup>19</sup> Some 28

<sup>18</sup>“γόμον χρυσοῦ καὶ ἀργύρου καὶ λίθου τιμίου καὶ μαργαριτῶν, ‘merchandise consisting of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and pearls.’ Vv 12–13, which contain an extensive polysyndetic list of luxury trade goods (cf. Rev 5:12; BDF §460; Aune, “De esu carniū,” 309), serve as a preface to the lament of the merchants and therefore read like a later insertion of the author into an earlier text made to underscore the enormous wealth of both Babylon and the merchants who tried to satisfy her expensive and extravagant tastes. This list is limited to luxury trade goods primarily for the consumption of the very wealthy (Müller, 307; Wikenhauser, 136; Hadorn, 181).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 998.]

<sup>19</sup>“Rome is presented in vv 11–14 using the topos of the central world market, first found in Isocrates (Panegyricus 42), who describes the Piraeus as the center of Hellas, just as Strabo refers to Alexandria as the greatest emporium of the world (17.1.13); see Oliver, Ruling Power, 910. The extensive Roman trade in silver, gold, ivory, amber, crystal, ebony, jewelry, and rare dyes was proverbial (Dio Chrysostom Or. 13.34–36; Aelius Aristides Or. 17.11–13). The cities of Roman Asia, primarily located on waterways, were important trade routes from the Anatolian interior to the sea. The major products of Asia Minor, many of which were exported through Ephesus, included many of those listed in 18:12–13, such as wine, oil, marble, pottery, parchment, timber, horses, emeralds, gold, silver, iron, wool, linen, dyed fabrics, and tapestry. Aelius Aristides, writing in praise of Rome (Or. 26.11–13; tr. C. A. Behr, LCL), emphasizes her wealth and role in world trade:

Here [Rome] is brought from every land and sea all the crops of the seasons and the produce of each land, river, lake, as well as of the arts of the Greeks and barbarians, so that if someone should wish to view all these things, he must either see them by traveling over the whole world or be in this city. It cannot be otherwise than that there always be here an abundance of all that grows and is manufactured among each people. So many merchant ships arrive here, conveying every kind of goods from every people every hour and every day, so that the city is like a factory common to the whole earth. It is possible to see so many cargoes from India and even from Arabia Felix, if you wish, that one imagines that for the future the trees are left bare for the people there and that they must come here to beg for their own produce if they need anything. Again there can be seen clothing from Babylon and ornaments from the barbarian world beyond, which arrive in much larger quantity and more easily than if merchantmen bringing goods from Naxos or Cythnus had only put into Athens. Your farmlands are Egypt, Sicily, and all of Africa which is cultivated. The arrivals and departures of the ships never stop, so that one would express admiration for the harbor, but even the sea ... So everything comes together here, trade, seafaring, farming, the scourings of the mines, all the crafts that exist or have existed, all that is produced and grown. Whatever one does not see

items are listed by John somewhat in the pattern of Ezek. 16:9-13 where a long list of luxury items found in ancient Jerusalem played a role in her downfall. Also Ezek. 27:5-24 contains a long list of luxury items in the prophets denunciation against the king of Tyre. Here in Rev. 18, the listing brings home dramatically the materialism of ancient Babylon/Rome as a major cause of God's wrath coming down on the city.<sup>20</sup>

This listing in vv. 11-13 leads to the divine pronouncement of doom in v. 14, καὶ ἡ ὀπώρα σου τῆς ἐπιθυμίας τῆς ψυχῆς ἀπῆλθεν ἀπὸ σοῦ, καὶ πάντα τὰ λιπαρὰ καὶ τὰ λαμπρὰ ἀπώλετο ἀπὸ σοῦ καὶ οὐκέτι οὐ μὴ αὐτὰ εὐρήσουσιν. “The fruit for which your soul longed has gone from you, and all your dainties and your splendor are lost to you, never to be found again!” The three stanzas of this judgment of doom spoken by God against Babylon / Rome denounce her fascination with luxury and material things. In her fall all of this will be lost forever and never again recovered. Several echoes of Hebrew thought and construction suggest a composition out of similar phraseology in Hebrew.<sup>21</sup>

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here, is not a thing which has existed or exists, so that it is not easy to decide which has the greater superiority, the city in regard to the present day cities, or the empire in regard to the empires which have gone before.

“In Seneca’s tragedy *Hercules Oetaeus* 659–69 (tr. F. J. Miller, LCL), the author characterizes the life of the poor man’s wife as innocent of luxuries, implicitly condemning luxury for the simple older ways:

The poor man’s wife no necklace wrought  
of costly pearls, the red sea’s gift,  
May wear; no gems from eastern shores  
Weigh down her ears; nor does she wear  
Soft scarlet wools in Tyrian dye  
Twice dipped; not hers with Lydian art  
To’broider costly silks whose threads  
The Serians under sunlit skies  
From orient treetops gather; she  
With common herbs must dye the web  
Which she with unskilled hands has wov’n.

[David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 979–980.]

<sup>20</sup>“In Rev 18:12–13, however, the extensive list of luxurious trade goods consumed by Rome takes the form of a litany consisting of twenty-nine items, each connected to the previous item with the conjunctive particle καί, ‘and,’ making the whole list an example of polysyndeton (see Aune, “De esu carniū,” 309, with examples of polysyndeton from Hellenistic literature; BDF §460; see also Rev 5:12). Polysyndeton produces the effect of ‘extensiveness and abundance by means of an exhaustive summary’ (BDF §460); i.e., it rhetorically emphasizes the conspicuous consumption of Rome. For other examples of polysyndeton in Revelation, see 4:11; 5:12, 13; 7:12. Using this rhetorical device, the author deftly conveys the profound materialism of Rome/Babylon.” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 980–981.]

<sup>21</sup>“Here the phrase translated ‘the ripe fruit which you desired’ can be rendered more literally ‘the ripe fruit of the desire

After this condemnation of Babylon for her materialism, in v. 15-16a the theme of the merchants’ lament is picked up again from v. 11 as an introduction to the cries of the lament. Οἱ ἔμποροι τούτων οἱ πλουτήσαντες ἀπ’ αὐτῆς ἀπὸ μακρόθεν στήσονται διὰ τὸν φόβον τοῦ βασανισμοῦ αὐτῆς κλαίοντες καὶ πενθοῦντες 16 λέγοντες, *The merchants of these wares, who gained wealth from her, will stand far off, in fear of her torment, weeping and mourning aloud, 16 saying,*

The phony sadness of these merchants is once more underscored here. They are not sad to see Rome fall nearly as much as they are about the losing of their prime buyer of their merchandise. The participle phrase οἱ πλουτήσαντες ἀπ’ αὐτῆς, *who grew rich from her*, highlights this.

The formula nature of the cries and the narrative introduction to it surface again:

ἀπὸ μακρόθεν στήσονται διὰ τὸν φόβον τοῦ βασανισμοῦ αὐτῆς κλαίοντες καὶ πενθοῦντες, *from a distance they will stand because of the fear of her torment weeping and mourning*

Notice the similarity to that of the kings in v. 10a,

ἀπὸ μακρόθεν ἑστηκότες διὰ τὸν φόβον τοῦ βασανισμοῦ αὐτῆς λέγοντες: *from a distance standing because of the fear of her torment.*

The two verbal expression of grief κλαίουσιν καὶ πενθοῦσιν in v. 11 are repeated as participles in v. 15 κλαίοντες καὶ πενθοῦντες highlighting their supposed grief over the loss of Babylon.

The meaning of the identical expression here is that same as in v. 10.

**b) The cries of lament, vv. 16b-17a.** οὐαὶ οὐαὶ, ἡ πόλις ἡ μεγάλη, ἡ περιβεβλημένη βύσσινον καὶ πορφυροῦν καὶ κόκκινον καὶ κεχρυσωμένη [ἐν] χρυσίῳ καὶ λίθῳ τιμίῳ καὶ μαργαρίτῃ, 17 ὅτι μιᾷ ὥρᾳ ἠρημώθη ὁ τοσοῦτος πλοῦτος. “*Alas, alas, the great city, clothed in fine linen, in purple and scarlet, adorned with gold, with jewels, and with pearls! 17 For in one hour all this wealth has been laid waste!*” The core structure of this verbal cry is identical

of your soul.’ The phrase reflects the Semitic idiom אַוְוַת נַפְשֶׁכָּא *aw-wat napšēkā*, ‘your soul desired’ (the piel of אָוַוַת *awwā*, ‘to desire,’ regularly occurs with נַפֶּשׁ *nepeš* as its subject; Deut 12:15, 20, 21; 14:26; cf. Charles, 1:108), and is translated τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν τῆς ψυχῆς σου, ‘the desire of your soul,’ in the LXX (Deut 12:20, 21; 14:26; cf. LXX Ps 9:24[MT 10:3]; LXX Ps 20:3[MT 21:2]; Jer 2:24; 4 Macc 2:1; Pss. Sol. 2:24; T. Reub. 4:9). The closely related expression אַוְוַת נַפְשֶׁךָ *ta’awāt-nāpeš*, ‘desire of soul,’ also occurs (Isa 26:8; Ps 10:3). ‘Ripe fruit’ here is a metaphor for the good things of life; cf. POxy 2.298, ‘there has not been much fruit [ὄπώρα, i.e., ‘results’] in Memphis up to the present’ (MM, 454). Terms for ‘fruit’ in the OT and NT (Hebrew פֵּרִי *pēri*; Greek καρπός) are frequently used in metaphorical senses (D. G. Burke, “Fruit,” ISBE 2:364–66; F. Hauck, TDNT 3:614–16). Charles also thinks this verse out of place, but relocates it after v 21 (1:108).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1003.]



tical to that by the kings of the earth in v. 10b:

v. 16b-17a. Merchants

οὐαὶ οὐαὶ, ἡ πόλις ἡ μεγάλη,...

ὅτι μιᾶ ὥρᾳ ἠρημώθη ὁ τοσοῦτος πλοῦτος,

v. 10b. Kings

οὐαὶ οὐαὶ, ἡ πόλις ἡ μεγάλη,

ὅτι μιᾶ ὥρᾳ ἦλθεν ἡ κρίσις σου

What is different is appropriate to each group wailing over her destruction.

Kings of the earth:

Βαβυλῶν ἡ πόλις ἡ ἰσχυρά,

... ἦλθεν ἡ κρίσις σου.

Merchants:

ἡ περιβεβλημένη βύσσινον καὶ πορφυροῦν καὶ κόκκινον

καὶ κεχρυσωμένη [ἐν] χρυσίῳ καὶ λίθῳ τιμίῳ καὶ μαργαρίτῃ,

... ἠρημώθη ὁ τοσοῦτος πλοῦτος.

The kings name Babylon in their lament, and her doom is described as ‘your judgment has come.’ The merchants, however, add references to her luxury to their cry, and her destruction is described as her wealth being destroyed. The same essential point is made between the two laments while they are ‘customized’ to the situation of each group lamenting over her.

Also note the close similarity of description of the city between 17:4 and 18:16b.<sup>22</sup>

Rev 17:4

περιβεβλημένη

dressed

πορφυροῦν καὶ κόκκινον

in purple and scarlet

καὶ κεχρυσωμένη

and adorned

χρυσίῳ καὶ λίθῳ τιμίῳ

with gold and precious

stones

καὶ μαργαρίτῃ

and pearls

Rev 18:16b

ἡ περιβεβλημένη

who were dressed

βύσσινον καὶ πορφυροῦν

καὶ κόκκινον

in fine linen and purple

and scarlet

καὶ κεχρυσωμένη

and adorned

ἐν χρυσίῳ καὶ λίθῳ τιμίῳ

with gold and precious

stones

καὶ μαργαρίταις

and pearls

In 18:16 John essentially repeats the picture of extreme luxury from 17:4, and such depictions of Roman wealth were common in his day.<sup>23</sup>

### 3) Lament of the sea faring people, vv. 17b-

<sup>22</sup>David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1004.

<sup>23</sup>“On the extraordinary wealth and luxury of Rome, see Tacitus *Annals* 3.52.1–54.5; Seneca *Moral Epistles* 86.1–7; Pliny *Hist. nat.* 9.58.117–18; 13.29.92; Petronius *Satyricon* 31.3–34.4; Pliny *Ep.* 2.17; F. Christ, *Die römische Weltherrschaft in der antiken Dichtung* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1938) 4–64.” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1004.]

17b Καὶ πᾶς κυβερνήτης καὶ πᾶς ὁ ἐπὶ τόπον πλέων καὶ ναῦται καὶ ὅσοι τὴν θάλασσαν ἐργάζονται, ἀπὸ μακρόθεν ἔστησαν 18 καὶ ἔκραζον βλέποντες τὸν καπνὸν τῆς πυρώσεως αὐτῆς λέγοντες· τίς ὁμοία τῇ πόλει τῇ μεγάλῃ; 19 καὶ ἔβαλον χοῦν ἐπὶ τὰς κεφαλὰς αὐτῶν καὶ ἔκραζον κλαίοντες καὶ πενθοῦντες λέγοντες· οὐαὶ οὐαὶ, ἡ πόλις ἡ μεγάλη, ἐν ᾗ ἐπλούτησαν πάντες οἱ ἔχοντες τὰ πλοῖα ἐν τῇ θαλάσῃ ἐκ τῆς τιμότητος αὐτῆς, ὅτι μιᾶ ὥρᾳ ἠρημώθη.

17b And all shipmasters and seafarers, sailors and all whose trade is on the sea, stood far off 18 and cried out as they saw the smoke of her burning, “What city was like the great city?” 19 And they threw dust on their heads, as they wept and mourned, crying out, “Alas, alas, the great city, where all who had ships at sea grew rich by her wealth! For in one hour she has been laid waste.”

This third group now comes to the surface. Some overlap exists between these people of the sea and the merchants simply because shipping merchandise to Rome was as important, if not more important, than hauling it overland along the super highways that led into the city (see above trade routes map).

While the kings and the merchants represent an adaptation of Ezek. 27:33-35, this third group of people connected to the sea represents Ezek. 27:25-32, also with vv. 29-30 especially. This OT text provided John with much of his imagery here with the prophet’s condemnation of the ancient seaport town of Tyre.

The multiple labels of this group is distinct from the first two.<sup>24</sup> Very clear are the first (κυβερνήτης) and third

<sup>24</sup>“The phrase that has exercised commentators and challenged ancient scribes (see Notes 18:17.b–b. and 18:17.d.) is καὶ πᾶς ὁ ἐπὶ τόπον πλέων, literally ‘and every one who sails to a place’ (NRSV: ‘seafarers’). The context consists of three types of people whose livelihood is linked to the sea: the κυβερνήτης, ‘shipmaster, captain,’ the ναύτης, ‘sailor,’ and the miscellaneous category ὅσοι τὴν θάλασσαν ἐργάζονται, ‘those whose with maritime professions,’ probably fishermen, a phrase with parallels in classical literature (Dionysius Hal. *Antiq. Rom.* 3.46.3; Appian *Pun.* 1.2). Several commentators have assumed that καὶ πᾶς ὁ ἐπὶ τόπον πλέων is corrupt and have suggested emendations: (1) Nestle (Einführung, 181) conjectured that the original reading was ὁ ἐπὶ πόντον πλέων, ‘one who sails on the sea’ (πόντον can be abbreviated as ποτον, with a horizontal line over the first omicron), a proposal supported only by a very few MSS. It was, however, the reading preferred by Primasius: *omnis super mare navigans*, ‘all who sail on the sea.’ (2) Kraft (236) also assumed that the text is corrupt and suggested several conjectures based on LXX Ezek 27:29, settling on ‘boat-swain’ (Bootsmann), an intermediate position between the shipmaster and the sailor. The list of marine grades in Plutarch *Praec. ger. reip.* 807b, however, simply lists ναύκληρος, ‘shipowner,’ κυβερνήτης, ‘captain,’ and ναύτης, ‘sailor.’ (3) Friedrichsen (“Sp-Page 918

(ναῦται) terms of *captain* and *sailors*. The fourth group ὅσοι τὴν θάλασσαν ἐργάζονται is something of a ‘catch all’ reference literally meaning, *as many as work on the sea*, with a probable focus on fishermen. The second term, however, πᾶς ὁ ἐπὶ τόπον πλέων is puzzling with a literal meaning of *every one who sails to a place*. From some similar kinds of references in the secular literature, it seems to be reference to seafarers who travel by sea to Rome.<sup>25</sup> This would provide a distinct category

rachliches,” 282–91), too, assumed that ὁ ἐπὶ τόπον πλέων was corrupt and suggested the simple expedient of reading the phrase as ὁ ἐπιτοπον πλέων, i.e., ‘the one who has the opportunity to sail,’ i.e., the passenger (cf. Acts 27:6, which illustrates that passengers could only sail if they happened to find space on some vessel going their way). In this instance, however, emendation does not seem to be necessary.” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1005.]

<sup>25</sup>“πλεῖν ἐπὶ + accusative of place does occur, though rarely (see Thucydides 1.53.2; 4 Macc 7:3; SIG, 409.4ff.), and though τόπος usually means ‘place’ or ‘region,’ it can be used more specifically in the sense of ‘port.’ In the anonymous Periplus Maris Rubri, the term τόπος occurs more than forty times to indicate localities or ports. Conzelmann (Acts, 215; cf. id., ZNW 66 [1975] 288–90) discusses the occurrence of τόπος in Rev 18:17 and Acts 27:2 and argues that τόπος is used several times in the sense of ‘port’ in the Periplus Maris Rubri (ed. Frisk, 8 [p. 3, line 26], 10 [p. 4, line 9], 17 [p. 6, line 16]). However, while the term τόπος is often used of a ‘place’ that can also designated as a ‘port’ (λιμὴν) or a ‘harbor’ (ὄρμος) or a ‘port of trade’ (ἐμπόριον), it cannot properly be said that τόπος has the semantic meaning ‘port’ or ‘harbor’ or ‘port of trade’ (for a discussion this terminology, see Casson, Periplus, 271–77: “Appendix 1. Harbors and Ports”). The term τόποι ἀποδεδειγμένοι, ‘designated places,’ really means ‘designated ports’ (P. Ross. Georg. 2.18, 33, 133, 196 [A.D. 140]; P. Hib. 198.110–22 [2nd century B.C.]; cf. Casson, Periplus, 273–74).

“Long ago Swete (237) was on the right track when he translated ὁ ἐπὶ τόπον πλέων as ‘he who sails for (any) port,’ which he understood to refer to the merchant who goes with his goods or the chance passenger (vector); i.e., the two major options for understanding ὁ ἐπὶ τόπον πλέων are as (1) seagoing merchants or (2) seafarers or travelers. On the basis of the use of τόπος in the Periplus Maris Rubri, Conzelmann suggested the translation Seekaufleute, i.e., ‘seagoing merchants’ (ZNW 66 [1975] 290). This is probably incorrect, however, for if the author had intended merchants, he would probably have used one of the three common terms for port or harbor (λιμὴν, ὄρμος, ἐμπόριον). It is, therefore, more appropriate to translate the phrase as Küstenfahrer, ‘coastal traveler,’ as is done by Weiss-Heitmüller, 305; Bousset (1906) 423; and Bauer-Aland, col. 1343. Similarly, Lohmeyer (151), followed by Koester (TDNT 8:203), translates the phrase ὁ ἐπὶ τόπον πλέων, as ‘der (von Ort zu Ort fahrende) Küstenfahrer,’ ‘the coastal traveler (who travels from place to place).’

“Attempts to construe τόπος as a physical part of a ship do not make good sense (Kraft, 236); the catalogue of ship components found in Athenaeus Deipn. 204a (frequently cited in this regard) does not use the term τόπος. Finally, it is of interest that sea captains and sailors are widely portrayed as charlatans in Philostratus Vita Apoll. 4.32.”

[David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1005–1006.]

ry that fits between the clearly distinct categories of the first and third references.

In this group a double lament structure is provided of first a distinct lament and then a second one following the structural patterns of the first and second groups above.

**First lament**, ἀπὸ μακρόθεν ἔστησαν καὶ ἔκραζον βλέποντες τὸν καπνὸν τῆς πυρώσεως αὐτῆς λέγοντες: τίς ὁμοία τῆ πόλει τῆ μεγάλης; *from a distance they stood and were crying out as they were seeing the smoke of her burning, saying “What city is like the great city?”* Almost every element of the narrative intro here is a repeat of a phrase found in the other laments: ἀπὸ μακρόθεν ἔστησαν, vv. 10, 15, 17; ἔκραζον, vv. 2, 19; βλέποντες, v. 9; τὸν καπνὸν τῆς πυρώσεως αὐτῆς, v. 9; λέγοντες, vv. 4, 7, 10, 21. Thus John crafts a short lament intro following the established pattern in this chapter.

Then the verbal lament itself, τίς ὁμοία τῆ πόλει τῆ μεγάλης; is an adaptation of Ezek. 27:32b, from the Hebrew *מִי כְצֹר כְּתַיִר בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם*, “Who was ever destroyed like Tyre in the midst of the sea?”<sup>26</sup> The framing of the question in the lament anticipates the answer of no one; cf. 13:4 for this type question also in Revelation.<sup>27</sup> In the background here possibly stands a subsequent depiction of the massive fire that destroyed most of Rome in 64 AD and this is described from one onboard a ship either on the Tiber River or near the mouth of the river.<sup>28</sup> This huge disaster perhaps stands as a background model for John’s apocalyptic picture of the destruction of the apocalyptic Babylon at the end of time.

**Second lament**, καὶ ἔβαλον χοῦν ἐπὶ τὰς κεφαλὰς αὐτῶν καὶ ἔκραζον κλαίοντες καὶ πενθοῦντες λέγοντες: οὐαὶ οὐαὶ, ἡ πόλις ἡ μεγάλη, ἐν ἧ ἔπλούτησαν πάντες οἱ

<sup>26</sup>The LXX manuscript evidence overwhelmingly favors omitting this lament included in one or two secondary manuscripts taken from the Hebrew text: *τις ὡσπερ τυρος κατασιγηθεῖσα ἐν μεσῶ θαλάσσης* “Who was ever destroyed like Tyre in the midst of the sea?”

<sup>27</sup>“The form of this rhetorical question (interrogative pronoun + ὁμοίος) occurs again in 13:4; it is intended to elicit the answer ‘no one’ or ‘nothing’ (see Exod 15:11; Deut 33:29; Pss 35:10[LXX 34:10]; 71:19[LXX 70:19]; Sir 48:4). Sometimes the point is made more directly through a declarative sentence: οὐκ ἔστιν ὁμοίος, ‘there is no one like’ or ‘there is nothing like’ (1 Kgs 10:24; 1 Chr 17:20; 2 Chr 6:14; Ps 86:8[LXX 85:8]).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1006.]

<sup>28</sup>“An enormous and tremendously destructive fire broke out in Rome in A.D. 64 and burned for more than six days, destroying much of ten of the fourteen districts of the city (Tacitus Annals 15.38–41). Eckhardt speculates that the author was on board a ship on the Tiber or near the mouth of the Tiber when the burning of Rome occurred under Nero in A.D. 64, and this became a model for his anticipation of the eschatological destruction of Rome (Johannes, 63, 72–73).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1006.]

ἔχοντες τὰ πλοῖα ἐν τῇ θαλάσῃ ἐκ τῆς τιμότητος αὐτῆς, ὅτι μιᾷ ὥρᾳ ἠρημώθη. And they threw dust on their heads, as they wept and mourned, crying out, “Alas, alas, the great city, where all who had ships at sea grew rich by her wealth! For in one hour she has been laid waste.” Here the narrative intro core καὶ ἔκραζον κλαίοντες καὶ πενθοῦντες λέγοντες, and they were crying out while weeping and mourning as they were saying, is a repetition of the intro core for both the kings (vv. 9-10a) and the merchants (vv. 15-16a), although in shortened expression. What is distinct to this intro is καὶ ἔβαλον χοῦν ἐπὶ τὰς κεφαλὰς αὐτῶν, And they threw dust upon their heads. Even in the Greco-Roman cultures as well as the Semitic cultures of the middle east, the throwing of dust upon one’s head as a part of a grief ritual supposedly signaled contrition as a part of a verbal lament.<sup>29</sup> Once more Ezek. 27, especially v. 30, stands in the background of John’s depiction.

The verbal lament in v. 19b reproduces the lament structure from the first two in v. 10b and vv. 16-17a: the woes followed by designation of the city and then a reason is given. οὐαὶ οὐαὶ, ἡ πόλις ἡ μεγάλη, ... ὅτι μιᾷ ὥρᾳ ἠρημώθη. *Woe, woe!, the great city...because in one hour she will be destroyed.*

As with the first two some ‘customizing’ occurs which gives distinctives to this third lament. Generally this third lament is an abbreviated form of the second lament in vv. 16-17a. But the first distinctive is ἐν ἣ ἔπλούτησαν πάντες οἱ ἔχοντες τὰ πλοῖα ἐν τῇ θαλάσῃ ἐκ τῆς τιμότητος αὐτῆς, *in whom grew wealthy all those having ships in the sea from her prosperity.* Again the commercial aspect is the high lighted emphasis. Trade via shipping is a big factor in her downfall. The reason given here, ὅτι μιᾷ ὥρᾳ ἠρημώθη, is just an abbreviated form of the one in the second lament, *ὅτι μιᾷ ὥρᾳ ἠρημώθη ὁ τοσοῦτος πλοῦτος* (v. 17a).

The hypocrisy of the kings of the earth in their supposed grief over the fall of Rome is clear in the comparison of 18:9-10 with 17:16-18. They burn down the city out of hatred for her, and then grieve her loss. At least, they go through the customary outward rituals of lament. Then the hypocrisy of the merchants and the naval people comes through in the powerful, repeated emphasis upon losing their source of wealth with the fall of Rome. To them she was a money making machine and little else. Although this seems somewhat

<sup>29</sup>“This specific action is based on another allusion to Ezek 27, this time in v 30, where the mariners and pilots of the sea stand on the shore and look at the ruined Tyre, wailing bitterly and throwing dust on their heads. The custom of throwing dust on one’s head was an act of mourning or sorrow (Josh 7:6; Job 2:12; Lam 2:10; 1 Macc 11:71), repentance (Job 42:6), or contrition when accompanied by prayer (2 Macc 10:25; 14:15; 3 Macc 1:18; Maximus Tyrius 5.7f-h; Ovid Metam. 8.530; cf. Neuer Wettstein, ad Rev 18:19).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1006.]

illogical and dumb, it reminds us of how evil operates. The quest for power and control is blinding. The craving for wealth is equally blinding. Evil deceives people that way.

#### 4) *Command to God’s people, v. 20*

20 Εὐφραίνου ἐπ’ αὐτῆ, οὐρανὲ καὶ οἱ ἅγιοι καὶ οἱ ἀπόστολοι καὶ οἱ προφῆται, ὅτι ἔκρινεν ὁ θεὸς τὸ κρίμα ὑμῶν ἐξ αὐτῆς.

20 Rejoice over her, O heaven, you saints and apostles and prophets! For God has given judgment for you against her.

In something of an unexpected interruption of the thought flow verse 20 comes as a divine command directed to the people of God in both heaven and earth to rejoice over the fall of Rome. This anticipates the much more detailed admonitions of 19:1-10. Such ‘interruptions’ in the text tends to bother commentators, who are enslaved to western logic. All kinds of ‘logical’ explanations are typically offered to account for these interruptions. But this pattern is so typically Hebraic in nature that we should be surprised to not find them.

The creativity of John in using his OT prophetic sources in order to depict the details of his vision at this point really shines in this pattern of tossing in a surprise or two. Conceptually they are quit understandable. The divine pronouncement of judgment upon Rome in v. 14 reflects God’s reaction to the listing of enormous materialism in vv. 11b-13. The divine admonition to God’s people to rejoice in v. 20 stands as a powerful reminder to us as His people of the ultimate condemnation of materialism and the evil connected to it. In that we should rejoice. The purity of God prevails and the holiness of God’s people is vindicated.

The structure of the admonition follows that of the verbal laments: admonitions, designation of individuals, followed by a reason.

*Εὐφραίνου ἐπ’ αὐτῆ, Rejoice over her.* This echoes 12:12a where the heavenly voice admonished, διὰ τοῦτο εὐφραίνεσθε, [οἱ] οὐρανοὶ καὶ οἱ ἐν αὐτοῖς σκηνοῦντες. *For this reason, rejoice you heavens and those tabernacling in them.* The second person singular imperative verb here, Εὐφραίνου, picks up on the vocative singular οὐρανὲ even though three vocative plurals follow it. Entirely acceptable Greek but not English. The background is from Psalm 96:11 (LXX 95:11), εὐφραινέσθωσαν οἱ οὐρανοί, καὶ ἀγαλλιάσθω ἡ γῆ, *Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice.* In 19:1 the great multitude of believers in heaven respond to this admonition, φωνὴν μεγάλην ὄχλου πολλοῦ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, loud voice of a large crowd in heaven. In 19:4, the 24 elders and the 4 living creatures join in the celebration.

*οὐρανὲ, καὶ οἱ ἅγιοι καὶ οἱ ἀπόστολοι καὶ οἱ προφῆται, Heaven, and saints and apostles and prophets.* The first

vocative οὐρανὲ is the umbrella term. The following three terms specifying two groups of believing people of God and their leaders, καὶ οἱ ἅγιοι καὶ οἱ ἀπόστολοι καὶ οἱ προφῆται, who reside in heaven are included in the admonition.<sup>30</sup> In 19:1, they are referenced under the one designation of ὄχλου πολλοῦ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, a large crowd in heaven. From all available historical data, by the time of writing of Revelation, the apostle John was the only surviving member of the original Twelve. The others had died mostly by martyrdom.

**ὅτι ἔκρινεν ὁ θεὸς τὸ κρίμα ὑμῶν ἐξ αὐτῆς, because God has judged this judgment for you against her.** The reason for the admonition to rejoice is the assertion that God has done what He promised to do in 6:9-11.

9 Καὶ ὅτε ἤνοιξεν τὴν πέμπτην σφραγίδα, εἶδον ὑποκάτω τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου τὰς ψυχὰς τῶν ἐσφαγμένων διὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ διὰ τὴν μαρτυρίαν ἣν εἶχον. 10 καὶ ἔκραξαν φωνῇ μεγάλῃ

<sup>30</sup>“καὶ οἱ ἅγιοι καὶ οἱ ἀπόστολοι καὶ οἱ προφῆται, ‘and you people of God and apostles and prophets.’ (On translating οἱ ἅγιοι, literally ‘saints, holy ones,’ as ‘people of God,’ see Comment on 5:8.) This polysyndetic list consists of three separate groups, as the definite articles with each substantive indicates. The groups ‘apostles’ and ‘prophets’ are also closely linked in many early Christian texts (Luke 11:49, 1 Cor 12:28–29; Eph 2:20; 3:5; 4:11; 2 Pet 3:2; Did 11:3 and Ign. Phld. 9:1). In each of these texts, οἱ ἀπόστολοι is a technical term referring to the twelve apostles. The term ἀπόστολος occurs three times in Revelation, once of charlatans who claim the name ‘apostle’ (2:2) and twice of the twelve apostles (18:20; 21:14; see Comment on 21:14). Eph 3:5 contains a very close parallel containing the three terms ἅγιοι, ‘saints, people of God,’ ἀπόστολοι, ‘apostles,’ and προφῆται, ‘prophets.’ The Ephesians passage can be construed several ways: ὡς νῦν ἀπεκαλύφθη τοῖς ἁγίοις ἀποστόλοις αὐτοῦ καὶ προφήταις, ‘as has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets’ (taking ἁγίοις, ‘holy,’ as an adjective modifying τοῖς ἀποστόλοις καὶ προφήταις, ‘the apostles and prophets,’ the most likely solution since the article τοῖς ‘the,’ is most naturally construed as belonging to ἀποστόλοις καὶ προφήταις) or ‘as has now been revealed to the saints, that is, to his apostles and prophets’ (taking ἁγίοις as a substantive, ‘holy [ones], saints,’ with ἀποστόλοις καὶ προφήταις forming a hendiadys in apposition to τοῖς ἁγίοις). The author of Ephesians has apparently combined the phrase νῦν δὲ ἐφανερώθη τοῖς ἁγίοις αὐτοῦ, ‘but now has been manifested to his saints’ (Col. 1:26), with οἱ ἀπόστολοι καὶ προφῆται from Eph 2:20 to form the more complex phrase in Eph 3:5 (Sandnes, Paul, 231). The same phrase occurs in 2 Pet 3:2, τῶν ἁγίων προφητῶν καὶ τῆς τῶν ἀποστόλων, ‘the holy prophets and apostles,’ probably referring to OT prophets and NT apostles, though it is not always certain whether OT prophets or early Christian prophets are in view. The fact that saints and apostles and prophets are enjoined to rejoice that God has avenged them suggests that members of all three groups have suffered martyrdom (17:6; 19:2; cf. 6:9–11) and are present in heaven. Probably both Peter and Paul were martyred in Rome during the Neronian persecution that began in A.D. 64 (see 1 Clem. 5:3–7; Ign. Rom. 4:3; Dionysius in Eusebius Hist. eccl. 2.25.8; Irenaeus Adv. haer. 3.1.1; Origen in Eusebius Hist. eccl. 3.1.2–3; Acts Peter 9.30–41; Acts Paul 11.1–7).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1007.]

λέγοντες· ἕως πότε, ὁ δεσπότης ὁ ἅγιος καὶ ἀληθινός, οὐ κρίνεις καὶ ἐκδικεῖς τὸ αἷμα ἡμῶν ἐκ τῶν κατοικούντων ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς; 11 καὶ ἐδόθη αὐτοῖς ἐκάστω στολή λευκὴ καὶ ἔρρέθη αὐτοῖς ἵνα ἀναπαύσονται ἔτι χρόνον μικρόν, ἕως πληρωθῶσιν καὶ οἱ σύνδουλοι αὐτῶν καὶ οἱ ἀδελφοὶ αὐτῶν οἱ μέλλοντες ἀποκτενεσθαι ὡς καὶ αὐτοί.

9 When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slaughtered for the word of God and for the testimony they had given; 10 they cried out with a loud voice, “Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long will it be before you judge and avenge our blood on the inhabitants of the earth?” 11 They were each given a white robe **and told to rest a little longer**, until the number would be complete both of their fellow servants and of their brothers and sisters, *i* who were soon to be killed as they themselves had been killed.

Now in the fall of Babylon the holy Judge of the world has demonstrated the justice of His holiness in bringing down into destruction the evil that persecuted and killed His people on earth. This vindication of God’s justice and holiness should thus be celebrated by His people.

The phrase ἔκρινεν ὁ θεὸς τὸ κρίμα ὑμῶν ἐξ αὐτῆς can be translated as **God judged the judgment of you from her**, But context argues more for a genitive of advantage understanding of ὑμῶν and an ablative of opposition understanding for ἐξ αὐτῆς. The rendering of **God has judged the condemnation against her for you** is more consistent with both 6:9-11 and that of the principle of *lex talionis* where God measures out justice for His people, rather than allowing them to take revenge.

While on earth we as His people may or may not be able to see divine justice at work. But from the perspective of heaven it becomes much clearer. And also clearer is that God operates on His own time table here, not that from human demands and wishes.

## **B. The symbolic action of the mighty angel, vv. 21-24.**

21 Καὶ ἤρην εἷς ἄγγελος ἰσχυρὸς λίθον ὡς μύλινον μέγαν καὶ ἔβαλεν εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν λέγων· οὕτως ὀρμήματι βληθήσεται Βαβυλῶν ἡ μεγάλη πόλις καὶ οὐ μὴ εὔρεθῆ ἔτι. 22 καὶ φωνὴ κιθαρῶδων καὶ μουσικῶν καὶ αὐλητῶν καὶ σαλπιστῶν οὐ μὴ ἀκουσθῆ ἔτι, καὶ πᾶς τεχνίτης πάσης τέχνης οὐ μὴ εὔρεθῆ ἔτι, καὶ φωνὴ μύλου οὐ μὴ ἀκουσθῆ ἔτι, 23 καὶ φῶς λύχνου οὐ μὴ φάνη ἔτι, καὶ φωνὴ νυμφίου καὶ νύμφης οὐ μὴ ἀκουσθῆ ἔτι· ὅτι οἱ ἔμποροὶ σου ἦσαν οἱ μεγιστᾶνες τῆς γῆς, ὅτι ἐν τῇ φαρμακείᾳ σου ἐπλανήθησαν πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, 24 καὶ ἐν αὐτῇ αἷμα προφητῶν καὶ ἁγίων εὔρεθῆ καὶ πάντων τῶν ἐσφαγμένων ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς.

21 Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a

great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, “With such violence Babylon the great city will be thrown down, and will be found no more; 22 and the sound of harpists and minstrels and of flutists and trumpeters will be heard in you no more; and an artisan of any trade will be found in you no more; and the sound of the millstone will be heard in you no more; 23 and the light of a lamp will shine in you no more; and the voice of bridegroom and bride will be heard in you no more; for your merchants were the magnates of the earth, and all nations were deceived by your sorcery. 24 And in you was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all who have been slaughtered on earth.”

The last segment of chapter 18 -- vv. 1-3, 9-20, 21-24 -- depicts the action of εἷς ἄγγελος ἰσχυρὸς, *one mighty angel*, along with his interpretation of his own action. The picking up of λίθον ὡς μύλινον μέγαν, *a stone like a large millstone*, and then καὶ ἔβαλεν εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν, *he threw it into the sea*, has Jer. 51:63-64 (LXX 28:63-64) in the background.

63 καὶ ἔσται ὅταν παύσῃ τοῦ ἀναγινώσκειν τὸ βιβλίον τοῦτο, καὶ ἐπιδήσεις ἐπ’ αὐτὸ λίθον καὶ ῥίψεις αὐτὸ εἰς μέσον τοῦ Εὐφράτου† 64 καὶ ἐρεῖς Οὕτως καταδύσεται Βαβυλῶν καὶ οὐ μὴ ἀναστῆ ἀπὸ προσώπου τῶν κακῶν, ὧν ἐγὼ ἐπάγω ἐπ’ αὐτήν.

63 When you finish reading this scroll, tie a stone to it, and throw it into the middle of the Euphrates, 64 and say, ‘Thus shall Babylon sink, to rise no more, because of the disasters that I am bringing on her.

But now the mighty angel takes this action and says his words of doom against apocalyptic Babylon, rather than Jeremiah some 600 years earlier.

The narrative intro in v. 21a is very short: Καὶ ἦρεν εἷς ἄγγελος ἰσχυρὸς λίθον ὡς μύλινον μέγαν καὶ ἔβαλεν εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν λέγων· *And one mighty angel picked up a*



Millstones, representative of numerous basalt implements found at Tell Hûm (W. S. LaSor)

stone like a large millstone and threw it into the sea, saying. What the angel picked up resembled most likely the

μύλος ὄνικός better known as the donkey’s millstone because it was turned by a donkey.<sup>31</sup> The symbolic action of throwing this stone into the sea pictured the impending doom of Babylon. A play on words is present that is usually ignored by Bible translators. The angel ἔβαλεν, *threw the stone into the sea*. But Babylon βληθήσεται, *will be thrown down*, by ὀρμήματι, *her violence*.

The pronouncement of doom which interprets the meaning of this symbolic action comes in vv. 21-24. This ‘funeral dirge’ is composed of a series that things that will cease with the destruction of Babylon. The verbs contain the double negative οὐ μὴ that intensifies the negating of the verb to the highest possible degree. After each negated verb comes the same phrase ἐν σοὶ ἔτι, *in you ever*. This adds even more negating intensity to each verb expression.

a) οὕτως ὀρμήματι βληθήσεται Βαβυλῶν ἡ μεγάλη πόλις καὶ οὐ μὴ εὐρεθῆ ἔτι, *Thus by your violence will be thrown down Babylon the great city and never will it be found ever*. The introductory ‘header’ declaration which then is amplified by those that follow.

b) καὶ φωνὴ κιθαρῶδων καὶ μουσικῶν καὶ αὐλητῶν καὶ σαλπιστῶν οὐ μὴ ἀκουσθῆ ἐν σοὶ ἔτι, *and the sound of harpists and minstrels and flutists and trumpeters will never be heard in you ever*. In the background here stands the images of Isa. 24:8 and 1 Macc. 3:45. With no musicians the city cannot carry out any ritual functions, which was considered essential to the life of any city in the ancient world.

c) καὶ πᾶς τεχνίτης πάσης τέχνης οὐ μὴ εὐρεθῆ ἐν σοὶ ἔτι, *and every craftsman of every trade will never be found in you ever*. The presence of a variety of craftsmen in a city was critical to its economic health and its cultural vitality. “The crafts typically included metalworking, brick-making, glassmaking, carpentry, perfume-making, tent-making, spinning, weaving, tanning, dyeing, pottery-making, carving, sculpture, and stonemasonry.”<sup>32</sup>

d) καὶ φωνὴ μύλου οὐ μὴ ἀκουσθῆ ἐν σοὶ ἔτι, *and the sound of a millstone will never be heard in you ever*.

<sup>31</sup>“This is part of an adaptation of Jer 51:63–64 (LXX 28:63–64). (On the phrase “mighty angel,” see Comment on 5:2.) In the Hellenistic and Roman periods, there were oil mills as well as grain mills. The mill consisted of a large round stone with a circular track in which a smaller doughnut-shaped rotary stone revolved, driven by a horizontal beam that extended through the middle of the rolling stone to an upright beam set in the base stone; the horizontal beam was driven by human or animal power (drawing in Kuhnen, *Nordwest-Palästina*, 45; see ADB 4:831–32). The kind of millstone referred to here would be similar in size, shape, and weight to the μύλος ὄνικός, “donkey’s millstone” (Mark 9:42; Matt 18:6), so called because it was turned by a donkey or mule.” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1008.]

<sup>32</sup>David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1009.

The grinding of flour to eat was essential to the life of every city. Jer. 25:10 includes the absence of the sound of the millstone in his pronouncement of doom. Take away this ability and no one eats.

e) *καὶ φῶς λύχνου οὐ μὴ φάνη ἐν σοὶ ἔτι, and the light of a lamp will never shine in you ever.* Again Jer. 25:10 stands behind this pronouncement. “Lamp light in the early evening, seen through the windows of homes in a city, indicates the presence of people and of life.”<sup>33</sup>

f) *καὶ φωνὴ νυμφίου καὶ νύμφης οὐ μὴ ἀκουσθῆ ἐν σοὶ ἔτι. and the sound of a groom and a bride will never be heard in you ever.* Jer. 25:10 also stands behind this. Newly married folks represent life and hope for the future of a city.

These six pronouncements of doom, with #s b - f amplifying # a, paint a horrid picture of death and destruction for the city of Rome. John draws upon the imagery of Jeremiah for much of his depiction here. Perhaps these are best simply read. The meanings are self evident. When coupled together they have a dramatic impact.

#### **Reasons for this pronouncement, vv. 23b-24.**

Two ὅτι clauses provide a dual basis for Babylon’s destruction.

*ὅτι οἱ ἔμποροὶ σου ἦσαν οἱ μεγιστᾶνες τῆς γῆς, for your merchants were the magnates of the earth.* Here Isa. 23:8 stands in the background for John. At first the repetition of οἱ ἔμποροὶ, *merchants*, seems strange until one picks up the οἱ ἔμποροὶ σου, *your merchants*. In the lament of οἱ ἔμποροι τῆς γῆς, the merchants of the earth, above in vv. 11-17a, the focus was dominantly on traders coming to Rome. Now the focus is on merchants of Rome trading with other merchants. These Roman merchants always had the upper hand and no hesitancy to use their advantage for their own good. They were οἱ μεγιστᾶνες τῆς γῆς, *the most prominent / powerful people of the earth*.

*ὅτι ἐν τῇ φαρμακείᾳ σου ἐπλανήθησαν πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, because all the nations were deceived by your sorcery.* This first leg of the second ὅτι clause begins a twofold amplification of how they used their status as οἱ μεγιστᾶνες τῆς γῆς, *the magnets of the earth*. Perhaps the magic spells (τῇ φαρμακείᾳ) of the Roman traders is linked to ἐκ τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς πέπωκαν πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, *out of the wine of the wrath of her immorality all nations have become drunk* (v. 3). Most likely standing behind the allusion to working magic spells is a similar accusation against historical Babylon in Isa. 47:9. Similar accusations against Nineveh are made in Nah. 3:4 with Nineveh pictured also as a whore. Behind the image of sorcery is the hard nosed economic power backed up by military might in conquering and dominat-

ing the entire Mediterranean world of John’s day.

The second leg of this amplifying ὅτι clause is *καὶ ἐν αὐτῇ αἷμα προφητῶν καὶ ἀγίων εὐρέθη καὶ πάντων τῶν ἐσφαγμένων ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς. and in her has been found the blood of prophets and of saints and of all those who have been slaughtered on the earth.* If Jer. 51:49 is behind this reference, then the inclusion of persecuted people goes beyond just God’s people. But still fresh in the minds of John’s readers would most likely have been the slaughtering of 1,100,000 Jews according to Josephus, Jewish Wars 6.420 in 66 to 73 AD, although most believe Josephus’ numbers are exaggerated.<sup>34</sup>

More likely John is remembering the martyrs from 6:9-11 who now constitute ὄχλου πολλοῦ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, a large crowd in heaven (19:1). The evil of Rome along with its persecution of God’s people become sufficient reasons to bring the city down into complete destruction.

## **2. What does the text mean to us today?**

<sup>34</sup>John’s Jewish origins may have made him sensitive to the slaughter of Jews right after the beginning of the first Jewish revolt and the enormous slaughter following it (A.D. 66–73). 1,100,000 people, probably an exaggerated figure, were reportedly killed (Jos. J.W. 6.420; John Malalas Chron. 10.45). After the revolt began in A.D. 66, fighting erupted in the Greek cities of Palestine (Caesarea, Philadelphia, Esbous, Gerasa, Pella, Gadara, Hippos, Gaulanitis, Tyre, Ptolemais, Gaga, Sebaste, Ascalon, Anthedon, Gaza, Scythopolis, and Damascus [where 10,500 Jews died]), resulting in the slaughter of scores of thousands of Jews (Jos. J.W. 2.457–86, 559–61). The victorious Titus took Jewish captives to Caesarea Philippi, Berytus, and Antioch, where they were thrown to wild animals and forced to fight and die as gladiators (Jos. J.W. 7.2.23–24; 3.37–40; 5.100–111). There is a change from the second person to the third person here (ἐν αὐτῇ, ‘in her,’ instead of the expected ἐν σοὶ, ‘in you’), which together with the motif of martyrdom, i.e., ‘the blood of the prophets and God’s people’ (which is not even hinted at until this concluding verse), suggests that this verse belongs to the final redaction of this chapter within the book as a whole (Wellhausen, *Analyse*, 29). The same motif is clearly redactional in 16:6 and 17:6, suggesting a dramatic change in the historical situation in which persecution had been intensified to the point of actual executions (i.e., either the Neronian persecution, A.D. 64–68, or a perceived crisis during the reign of Domitian at the end of the first century A.D.). A parallel is found in Matt 23:35, in a woe of Jesus directed to the scribes and Pharisees (NRSV): ‘so that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth [ἐκχυννόμενον ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς].’ See also 1 Enoch 9:1: Michael, Gabriel, Ouriel, Raphael, and Gabriel look down from heaven and see αἷμα πολλὸ ἐκχυννόμεν[ον] ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, ‘much blood shed upon the earth’ (cf. 1 Enoch 9:9: ὅλη ἡ γῆ ἐπλήθη αἵματος καὶ ἀδικίας, ‘the whole earth was filled with blood and iniquity’). 5 Ezra 1:32 (NRSV) reflects the notion that those who shed the blood of the prophets will eventually pay for their crime: ‘I sent to you my servants the prophets, but you have taken and killed them and torn their bodies in pieces; I will require their blood of you, says the Lord.’ [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1011.]

<sup>33</sup>David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1009.

What can we learn from this text? The continuing theme of the intensity and extent of God's wrath in judgment upon evil should emerge dramatically in vv. 9-24. The divine speech in vv. 9-20 brings that point home significantly as the wrath of God against those caught up in materialism and focused on luxury comes strongly to the forefront. This makes the preceding warnings to His own people in vv. 3-8 even more forceful. But the symbolic action of the 'mighty angel' in vv. 21-24 coupled with his liturgical pronouncements of doom bring all this to an overwhelming climax. As I first read these pronouncements in realization of their liturgical format it was a hugely depressing moment. They are powerfully thought provoking!

God is deadly serious about evil and evil people in our world. What He has planned for them at the end of time comes close to being indescribable! Our soft western culture doesn't have much of a clue about what lies ahead for people who oppose Him and His people. And for them to harm His people leads to an explosion of His anger and wrath. Our God is committed to His people in ways we cannot begin to understand!

It is in this that we can rejoice and find comfort.