



ἄχρι τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ ἐμνημόνευσεν ὁ θεὸς τὰ ἀδικήματα αὐτῆς. 6 ἀπόδοτε αὐτῇ ὡς καὶ αὐτὴ ἀπέδωκεν καὶ διπλώσατε τὰ διπλά κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτῆς, ἐν τῷ ποτηρίῳ ᾧ ἐκέρασεν κεράσατε αὐτῇ διπλοῦν, 7 ὅσα ἐδόξασεν αὐτὴν καὶ ἐστρηγίασεν, τοσοῦτον δότε αὐτῇ βασανισμὸν καὶ πένθος. ὅτι ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ αὐτῆς λέγει ὅτι κάθημαι βασίλισσα καὶ χήρα οὐκ εἰμι καὶ πένθος οὐ μὴ ἴδω. 8 διὰ τοῦτο ἐν μιᾷ ἡμέρᾳ ἤξουσιν αὐτὴν πληγαὶ αὐτῆς, θάνατος καὶ πένθος καὶ λιμός, καὶ ἐν πυρὶ κατακαυθήσεται, ὅτι ἰσχυρὸς κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ κρῖνας αὐτήν.

rado, preparad el doble para ella. 7 Cuanto ella se glorificó a sí misma y vivió sensualmente, así dadle tormento y duelo, porque dice en su corazón: “YO estoy SENTADA como REINA, Y NO SOY VIUDA y nunca veré duelo.” 8 Por eso, en un solo día, vendrán sus plagas: muerte, duelo y hambre, y será quemada con fuego; porque el Señor Dios que la juzga es poderoso.

rified herself and lived luxuriously, so give her a like measure of torment and grief. Since in her heart she says, “I rule as a queen; I am no widow, and I will never see grief,” 8 therefore her plagues will come in a single day— pestilence and mourning and famine— and she will be burned with fire; for mighty is the Lord God who judges her.”

a cup of terror for others, so give her twice as much as she gave out. 7 She has lived in luxury and pleasure, so match it now with torments and sorrows. She boasts, ‘I am queen on my throne. I am no helpless widow. I will not experience sorrow.’ 8 Therefore, the sorrows of death and mourning and famine will overtake her in a single day. She will be utterly consumed by fire, for the Lord God who judges her is mighty.”



## INTRODUCTION

With the angel’s interpretation of the woman as the great city in 17:18, the door is opened to explore the downfall of this city now identified by its code name of Babylon in chapter eighteen. But the perspective is different and unique. Instead of a straight narrative, the narrative angle is that of celebration and mourning. In chapter eighteen, the celebration comes from a different angel (vv. 1-4) and a heavenly voice (vv. 4-8). But the mourning comes first from the kings of the earth (vv. 9-10), in spite of the fact that they helped destroy her (17:16). It is followed by a two part mourning from the merchants of the earth (vv. 11-14; 15-17a). Finally, the ship masters mourn her destruction (vv. 17b-20). At the end of the chapter (vv. 21-24) the mighty angel (ἄγγελος ἰσχυρὸς) pronounces her doom. Then in 19:1-8 the mighty multitude of saints in heaven celebrates her destruction.

For those linked to God, the destruction of the evil city brings rejoicing. But for those immersed in evil, her destruction brings mixed responses. They hate her and conspire to destroy the city (17:16), but with her destruction they grieve realizing that they have lost their source of material wealth and plenty. This love/hate connection reflects the common evil that prevails through both the city and the inhabitants of the earth.

The differing responses to the destruction of evil challenges us to think through our relationship with evil people and institutions. Those who are holy in God’s

holiness are grateful to be rid of evil. But those who participate in evil engage in a love / hate relationship and can easily conspire to destroy it and turn right around a grieve sorely its destruction.

In this study we will examine the heavenly rejoicing over the fall of the city. Then in the next study the mourning over it by the evil people of the world.

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

Background issues always come first when approaching a scripture text in order to establish the proper foundation of understanding from the time of the composition of the text.

#### Historical Aspects:

The historical background for 18:1-8 centers on the external history more than the internal history. The hand copying of this text prior to the printing press gives us a few issues that need to be addressed.

**External History.** The tracing of the hand copying of this passage is most easily seen in examining the text apparatuses of the two primary printed Greek texts of the NT which stand behind almost all modern translations of the NT into contemporary western languages.

First, is the text apparatus of *The Greek New Testament* (UBS 4th rev ed.) which is specifically geared for the needs of Bible translators. This text apparatus

tus includes only the variations found in the hundreds of copies of this passages which the editors considered important for Bible translation.

The text apparatus of the UBS Greek New Testament lists three places where variations of wording occur that are deemed important for Bible translators to be aware of.



**18:2 [καὶ φυλακὴ παντός θηρίου ἀκαθάρτου], [and a prison (or haunt) for every unclean beast], {C}.**<sup>1</sup> Because a series of phrases are used back to back, the tendency of scribes was to overlook one or more, or else to repeat one twice.<sup>2</sup> The external evidence is split as to including this phrase or omitting it.<sup>3</sup> Due to the dependency of this text upon

<sup>1</sup>{C} καὶ φυλακὴ παντός θηρίου ἀκαθάρτου (A, but omit καὶ φυλακὴ παντός ὀρνέου ἀκαθάρτου) 2329 it<sup>gls</sup> syr<sup>h</sup> (cop<sup>sa</sup>) (arm) eth (Hippolytus) (Primasius) // omit κ C<sup>vid</sup> 051 1006 1841 2030 2053 2062 Byz [(P homoioteleuton) 046] it<sup>ar</sup> vg cop<sup>bo</sup> eth<sup>mss</sup> Andrew; Beatus // omit this phrase and preceding καὶ φυλακὴ παντός ὀρνέου ἀκαθάρτου syr<sup>ph</sup> Hippolytus<sup>mss</sup> // omit this phrase and preceding καὶ φυλακὴ παντός πνεύματος ἀκαθάρτου

[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>“18:2 [καὶ φυλακὴ παντός θηρίου ἀκαθάρτου] ([and a prison (or haunt) for every unclean beast]) {C}

“The three main elements which involve variations in the witnesses are the following:

- 1 -καὶ φυλακὴ παντός πνεύματος ἀκαθάρτου  
(and a prison for every unclean spirit)
- 2 -καὶ φυλακὴ παντός ὀρνέου ἀκαθάρτου  
(and a prison for every unclean bird)
- 3 -καὶ φυλακὴ παντός θηρίου ἀκαθάρτου  
(and a prison for every unclean beast)

“Because of the similarities in the beginning and ending of these elements, each one of the elements has been accidentally omitted in various manuscripts. All three (each of which involves an allusion to Isa 13:21; 34:11) probably belong to the original text of Revelation. Since, however, καὶ φυλακὴ παντός θηρίου ἀκαθάρτου is absent from several important witnesses, followed by RSV, TEV, NIV, NJB, REB, TOB, FC, and Seg, these words have been put in brackets to indicate uncertainty regarding the original text. NRSV follows the longer text.”

[Roger L. Omanson and Bruce Manning Metzger, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament: An Adaptation of Bruce M. Metzger’s Textual Commentary for the Needs of Translators* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006), 544.]

<sup>3</sup>“The multiplicity of variations among the witnesses, though complicated, is set forth clearly in the following tabular arrangement (drawn up for the Committee by Dr. Klaus Junack), where the three main elements are represented by 1, 2, and 3, and the five groups of readings are represented by A, B, C, D, and E.

- (1) καὶ φυλακὴ παντός πνεύματος ἀκαθάρτου
- (2) καὶ φυλακὴ παντός ὀρνέου ἀκαθάρτου
- (3) καὶ φυλακὴ παντός θηρίου ἀκαθάρτου

Isa. 13:21 and 34:11 all of the phrases were included in the printed text, even though some uncertainty does exist.

**18:3 τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς πορνείας, the wine of the wrath/passion of fornication, {B}.**<sup>4</sup> Here the placing / omission of τοῦ θυμοῦ varies and thus causes a shift in its meaning.<sup>5</sup> The internal factor of the

	(3a)	add καὶ μεμισημένου
A:	1 - 2 — 3 3a	2329 cop <sup>sa</sup> Oecumenius
	1 3a 2 3a 3 3a	it <sup>gls</sup>
	1 — 3 3a 2 —	Primasius
B:	1 — 2 3a -	κ 2053 Byz vg
	1 3a 2 3a -	2080 al
C:	1 3a - — 3 3a	A P
D:	- — 2 — 3 3a	1611 al
E:	1 3a - — -	Andrew

“It will be observed that amid the variety of readings each concludes with καὶ μεμισημένου, except that quoted by Primasius, who transposes the second and third elements. The similarities of the beginning and ending of the three main elements gave ample occasion for accidental omission. The Committee was of the opinion that all three elements (each of which involves an allusion to Is 13:21; 34:11) probably belonged to the original text of Revelation; since, however, καὶ φυλακὴ παντός θηρίου ἀκαθάρτου is absent from such important witnesses as κ 2053 2080 vg al, it was decided to enclose these words within square brackets.”

[Bruce Manning Metzger, United Bible Societies, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, Second Edition a Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies’ *Greek New Testament* (4th Rev. Ed.) (London; New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 682–683.]

<sup>4</sup>{B} τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς πορνείας κ 1006 1841 2030 2329 2344vid Byz [046] vg<sup>cl</sup> syr<sup>h</sup> cop<sup>sa</sup>, bo<sup>mss</sup> // τοῦ θυμοῦ τοῦ οἴνου τῆς πορνείας P 051 205 209 it<sup>gls</sup> cop<sup>bopt</sup> arm eth<sup>mss</sup> Hippolytus Andrew // τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς πορνείας A (C τῆς πορνείας τοῦ θυμοῦ) 1611 2053 2062 it<sup>ar</sup> vg<sup>ww</sup>, st cop<sup>bo</sup>mss (eth) Priscillian // τοῦ οἴνου τῆς πορνείας 1854 syr<sup>ph</sup> Primasius Beatus

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

<sup>5</sup>“The reading in the text (identical to the phrase in 14:8) seems to explain best the origin of the other readings. The difficulty of understanding the expression, as well as carelessness on the part of copyists, led to changes such as τοῦ θυμοῦ τοῦ οἴνου τῆς πορνείας (the wrath/passion of the wine of fornication), τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς πορνείας (the wrath/passion of fornication), τοῦ οἴνου τῆς πορνείας (the wine of fornication [the identical phrase occurs in 17:2 and is followed here in 18:3 by NJB]), τῆς πορνείας τοῦ θυμοῦ (the fornication of wrath/passion), and τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ (the wine of wrath/passion).

“In addition to the textual problem, the fact that θυμός can mean either ‘wrath’ (NRSV) or ‘passion’ (RSV) makes the interpretation and translation of the text difficult. If the reading in the text is followed, and θυμός is understood as ‘wrath,’ the sense may be ‘All the nations have drunk the wine of God’s anger roused by her fornication’ (REB). If θυμός is understood as ‘passion,’ the sense may be ‘for all nations have drunk the wine of her impure passion’ (RSV), that is, they have been seduced to turn away from worshiping God.

reading which can best explain the origin of the others played the decisive role in the adoption of the reading in the printed text with the external evidence distributed across the alternatives.

**18:3 πέτωκαν, has drunk, {D}.**<sup>6</sup> This reading does fit the context, even though πέπτωκαν, they have fallen, and πεπτώκασιν, they have fallen, have the stronger external support but do not fit the context.<sup>7</sup> Here a real dilemma arises. Internal evidence clearly favors πέτωκαν, but external evidence favors either ΠΕΠΤΩΚΑΝ or ΠΕΠΤΩΚΑΣΙΝ.

*Note to the reader:* you may have noticed {C}, {B}, and {D} after the listing of each of these places of variant readings, and wondered what they mean. One of the features of the UBS text apparatus is that with each reading the editorial committee indicates the level of confidence they place in the adopted reading as the original reading of the text.<sup>8</sup> The evaluation of {D} with

[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>6</sup>{D} πέτωκαν (or πεπόκασιν) (P 051 πέτωκεν) 1006<sup>c</sup> 2329 it<sup>ar, eis</sup> vg sy<sup>r</sup> arm (Andrew); Priscillian Beatus // πεπότικεν 2042 // πεπόκασιν (or πέπτωκαν) κ A C 205 209 1006\* 1611 1841 (1854 2053 2062 πέπτωκεν) 2030 Byz [046] eth Hippolytus // πέπτωκεν εις sy<sup>r</sup> hmg Hippolytus<sup>ms</sup> // omit πέτωκαν πάντα τὰ ἔθνη Primasius

[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>7</sup>“First of all, the most strongly supported readings, πέπτωκαν (they have fallen) and πεπτώκασιν (they have fallen), do not fit the context and seem to have arisen when copyists repeated the same verb from v. 2 (ἔπεσεν [it has fallen]). Secondly, the sense of the passage, as well as prophetic imagery (Jer 25:15 [= LXX 32:15] f.; 51:7, 39 [= LXX 28:7, 39]), seems to demand some form of the verb ‘to drink,’ or ‘to make drunken’ (compare Rev 14:8). The readings πεπόκασιν and πέτωκεν are morphological and grammatical improvements of πέτωκαν, but the meaning is the same. If πέπτωκαν or one of the other verbs meaning ‘has fallen’ is accepted as original, then the preposition ἐκ at the beginning of the verse will be interpreted as expressing cause, i. e., ‘All the nations have fallen because of (ἐκ) the wine ...’ (Osborne, Revelation, p. 661).” [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>8</sup>“1. The Evaluation of Evidence for the Text

“On the basis of generally accepted principles of textual analysis the Committee took into account the widest possible range of manuscript readings as well as all internal considerations concerning the origin and transmission of the text. But since in a number of instances the evidence from such sources points to the possibility of different solutions and thus involves different degrees of certainty with respect to the form of the original text, the letter A, B, C, or D has been employed within braces { } at the beginning of each apparatus item so as to mark one of four levels of certainty, as representing in large measure the difficulties encountered by the Committee in making textual decisions.

the last reading indicates considerable uncertainty over the original reading of this part of the text. This signals that a committee of five of the best experts<sup>9</sup> in the world in this field of text analysis is unsure. Such a conclusion merits serious consideration from the rest of us with limited or no skills in doing this kind of hugely technical analysis.

What is signaled here for the first time in our study of Revelation is that the original reading of the text is less certain than at any point through 18:8. To be sure, the variations in the readings do not inject false or heretical ideas. They do represent, however, the difficulty that early copyists experienced in understanding the passage while it was being hand copied for distribution in their day.

The second text apparatus to be considered is that found in the *Novum Testamentum Graece* (N-A 28th rev. ed). This apparatus gives a more complete listing of all of the variant readings in the known manuscripts of our time for this passage. The structuring of the apparatus is quite different from the UBS Greek text in order to list more references. Some 23 places are listed where variations in readings surface in 18:1-8.<sup>10</sup> What is reflected in this



The letter A indicates that the text is certain.

The letter B indicates that the text is almost certain.

The letter C, however, indicates that the Committee had difficulty in deciding which variant to place in the text.<sup>1</sup>

The letter D, which occurs only rarely, indicates that the Committee had great difficulty in arriving at a decision.”

[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), 3.]

<sup>9</sup>Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, And Bruce M. Metzger. [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>10</sup>18,1

\* και 051 M<sup>A</sup> latt sy<sup>ph</sup> bo (και is inserted before Μετά)

#### 2

° κ 046. 2030 ar (preposition ἐν is omitted)

\* επεσεν επεσεν P (ἔπεσεν is repeated four times)

‡ – κ 046. 1854. 2030 M<sup>K</sup> co

\* δαιμονων P 051. 1854. 2030 M<sup>K</sup> (δαιμονίων is replaced)

\* 1611 (και φυλακη παντος πνεύματος ακαθάρτου is omitted)

\* και μεμισημενου A gig sy<sup>rh</sup>; Hipp (after ακαθάρτου is και μεμισημένου inserted)

\*1 A P M<sup>A</sup> sy<sup>ph</sup>; Hipp (και φυλακη παντος ορνέου ακαθάρτου is inserted after 1st ακαθάρτου)

\*2 κ C P 046. 051. 1006. 1841. 1854. 2030. 2053. 2062. 2344 M ar vg sy<sup>ph</sup> sy; Bea (και φυλακη παντος θηριου ακαθάρτου is inserted before και μεμισημένου)

‡ txt A 1611. 2329 gig sy<sup>h</sup> (sa; Prim)

listing confirms what we encountered in the UBS listing. Copyists over the centuries prior to the middle ages reflected considerable uncertainty in the wording of this passage. Often their isolated variations simply reflect carelessness in paying close attention to the writing process. The use of quasi poetic phraseology by John in depicting the words of the angel caused considerable challenges to the copying process.

But in the final analysis we can exegete the adopted reading with high level confidence of it reflecting the original reading. In those few places where uncertainty is reflected by clustering of significant manuscripts we will address the alternative meanings created by the

**3**  
 \* 3 4 1 2 5 6 P 051 *M*<sup>A</sup> gig bo<sup>pt</sup>; Hipp (various sequence in listing for τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς πορνείας)  
 | 3–6 A 1611. 2053. 2062 ar vg<sup>st</sup> bo<sup>mss</sup>  
 | 1 2 5 6 1854 sy<sup>ph</sup>; Prim Bea  
 | 5 6 3 4 C  
 | txt κ 046. 1006. 1841. 2030. 2329 *M*<sup>K</sup> vgcl sy<sup>h</sup> sa bo<sup>ms</sup>  
 \* πεπωκεν P 051. 2053\* (variations of spelling for πέπωκαν)  
 | πεπτωκαν (vel πεπτωκασιν) κ A C 046. 1006\*. 1611. 1841. 2030 *M*<sup>K</sup>  
 | πεπτωκεν 1854. 2053c. 2062 sy<sup>hmg</sup>  
 | txt (vel πεπωκασιν) 1006<sup>c</sup>. 2329 latt sy<sup>h</sup>

**4**  
 \* εξελθε C 046. 1611. 2030. 2053. 2062 *M*<sup>K</sup> sams; Cyp Prim (alternative spelling for ἐξέλθατε)  
 \* 4 5 1–3 A 046. 051. 1006. 1611. 1841. 1854. 2030. 2053. 2062. 2329 *M*<sup>K</sup> latt sy (different sequence for ὁ λαός μου ἐξ αὐτῆς)  
 | txt κ C P  
 \* P 051. 1854 (καὶ ἐκ τῶν πληγῶν αὐτῆς is omitted)  
 \* βλαβητε 051. 1854 sy<sup>hmg</sup>; Bea (λάβητε is replaced)

**5**  
 \* αυτης 051. 2030 *M*<sup>K</sup> (αὐτῆς is added after ἐμνημόνευσεν)

**6**  
 \* υμιν 051 *M*<sup>A</sup> gig vg<sup>cl</sup> (after ἀπέδωκεν is ὑμῖν inserted)  
 \* αυτη P 051. 1854 *M*<sup>A</sup> sy; Prim αυτα 2053. 2062 (after διπλώσατε is αὐτῆ inserted)  
 ° A P 046. 051. 1006. 1611. 1841. 1854. 2053. 2062. 2329 *M*<sup>A</sup>  
 | txt κ C 2030 *M*<sup>K</sup> (°τὰ διπλᾶ is omitted)  
 \*<sup>1</sup> ως και αυτη και 046. 2030 *M*<sup>K</sup> (before κατὰ is ὡς inserted)  
 \*<sup>2</sup> αυτης κ 046. 2030 *M*<sup>K</sup> (αὐτῆς is inserted after ποτηρίφ)

**7**  
 \* εαυτην κ<sup>2</sup> 1006. 1841. 1854. (2329) *M*<sup>A</sup> sy<sup>ph,hmg</sup> (αὐτὴν is replaced)  
 | – 046\*  
 \* 051 (καὶ πένθος is omitted)  
 \* καθως *M*<sup>K</sup> (κάθημαι is replaced)  
 | καθιω 046

**8**  
 \* ο θεος A 1006. 1841. 2053<sup>com</sup> ar vg (κύριος ὁ θεὸς is replaced)  
 | ο κυριος 2053<sup>txt</sup>. 2062 sy<sup>ph</sup>; Prim  
 | ο θεος ο κυριος κ\*  
 | txt κ<sup>2</sup> C P 046. 051. 1611. 1854. 2030. 2329. 2344 *M* gig sy<sup>h</sup>; Cyp

[Eberhard Nestle and Erwin Nestle, *Nestle-Aland: NTG Apparatus Criticus*, ed. Barbara Aland et al., 28. revidierte Auflage. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012), 774–775.]

alteration of the original wording.

**Internal History.** The apocalyptic vision nature of the text dictates that little in 18:1-8 relates historically. The one item is the identification of the code name Βαβυλῶν, Babylon. But this has surfaced several times previously in Revelation and thus has already been thoroughly analyzed.

### Literary Aspects:

The literary side of this passage poses some of the greater background challenges. But getting a handle on them will make a big difference in understanding the text.

**Genre:** Of course, we continue the broad genre of apocalyptic vision with 18:1-8. The two perspectives represented in this part of the larger text of 18:1-19:10 become important to grasp.<sup>11</sup> First, in vv. 1-3 the perspective is that of an angel descending from heaven to earth with the announcement of the fall of Babylon. This is reaffirmed by a φωνὴν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, voice out of heaven in vv. 4-20, especially vv. 4-8. Then the ‘mighty angel’ pronounces actual destruction on Babylon in vv. 21-24. This is followed by the celebration of the ‘great multitude in heaven’ over her destruction in 19:1-10.

From a literary pattern perspective, the first unit in vv. 1-3 follows a well defined OT ritual lament that has striking similarities to Ezekiel’s account of the lament

<sup>11</sup>“In this chapter the author presents the events surrounding the fall of Babylon, not in chronological order or in logical sequence but rather in such a way as to create an emotional effect on the hearers. Rev 18 consists of three closely related textual units that are formally presented as three speeches, the first by “another angel” (vv 1–3), the second by “another voice” (vv 4–20), and the third by ‘a mighty angel’ (vv 21–24). The chapter begins with the announcement that Babylon has fallen (vv 1–3). The entire section that follows in vv 4–20 is a speech uttered by the unidentified heavenly voice in v 4 (Yarbro Collins, “Revelation 18,” 193; Bauckham, “Revelation 18,” 340). This speech consists of two parts: the first deals with events preceding the fall of Babylon (vv 4–8), including the future consequences of the wickedness of Babylon (note the future tenses following διὰ τοῦτο, ‘because of this,’ in v 8: ἔξουσιν, ‘will come’; κατακαυθήσεται, ‘will be burned’). Thereafter the focus is on events following her fall (vv 9–20), first in future tenses (v 8, ἔξουσιν, κατακαυθήσεται; v 9, κλαύσουσιν, ‘will weep,’ κόψονται, ‘will wail’; v 11, κλαίουσιν, ‘weep,’ πενθοῦσιν, ‘mourn,’ ἀγοράζει, ‘buys’ [all futuristic presents in v 11]) and then (after v 18) in past tenses. Finally, in v 21, the prophecy that Babylon will be destroyed is reiterated. The angels who announce the events (18:1, 4, 21) are not explicitly described as coming after one another (as are the angelic figures in 8:7, 8, 10, 12; 9:1, 13; 11:15). Babylon’s fall is not the only theme linking these various segments together. A reiterated motif is that her fall takes place ‘in a single day’ (18:8) or ‘in a single hour’ (18:10, 17, 19); i.e., God’s vengeance upon her will take place quickly and unexpectedly.” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 975–976.]

over Tyre in Ezek. 26:15-18; 27:1-8, 26-36.<sup>12</sup> Although

<sup>12</sup>**Ezek. 26:15-18.** 15 διότι τάδε λέγει κύριος κύριος τῆ Σορ Οὐκ ἀπό φωνῆς τῆς πτώσεώς σου ἐν τῷ στενάξει τραυματίας ἐν τῷ σπάσει μάχαιραν ἐν μέσῳ σου σεισθήσονται αἱ νῆσοι;† 16 καὶ καταβήσονται ἀπὸ τῶν θρόνων αὐτῶν πάντες οἱ ἄρχοντες ἐκ τῶν ἐθνῶν τῆς θαλάσσης καὶ ἀφελοῦνται τὰς μίτρας ἀπὸ τῶν κεφαλῶν αὐτῶν καὶ τὸν ἱματισμὸν τὸν ποικίλον αὐτῶν ἐκδύσονται· ἐκστάσει ἐκστήσονται, ἐπὶ γῆν καθεδοῦνται καὶ φοβηθήσονται τὴν ἀπώλειαν αὐτῶν καὶ στενάξουσιν ἐπὶ σέ·† 17 καὶ λήμνονται ἐπὶ σέ θρῆνον καὶ ἐροῦσίν σοι Πῶς κατελύθη ἐκ θαλάσσης, ἡ πόλις ἡ ἐπαινεστὴ ἡ δοῦσα τὸν φόβον αὐτῆς πᾶσι τοῖς κατοικοῦσιν αὐτήν;† 18 καὶ φοβηθήσονται αἱ νῆσοι ἀφ’ ἡμέρας πτώσεώς σου.†

15 Thus says the Lord God to Tyre: Shall not the coastlands shake at the sound of your fall, when the wounded groan, when slaughter goes on within you? 16 Then all the princes of the sea shall step down from their thrones; they shall remove their robes and strip off their embroidered garments. They shall clothe themselves with trembling, and shall sit on the ground; they shall tremble every moment, and be appalled at you. 17 And they shall raise a lamentation over you, and say to you: How you have vanished from the seas, O city renowned, once mighty on the sea, you and your inhabitants, who imposed your terror on all the mainland! 18 Now the coastlands tremble on the day of your fall; the coastlands by the sea are dismayed at your passing.

**Ezek. 27:1-8.** 27.1 Καὶ ἐγένετο λόγος κυρίου πρὸς με λέγων† 2 Υἱὲ ἀνθρώπου, λαβὲ ἐπὶ Σορ θρῆνον† 3 καὶ ἐρεῖς τῆ Σορ τῆ κατοικούση ἐπὶ τῆς εἰσόδου τῆς θαλάσσης, τῷ ἐμπορίῳ τῶν λαῶν ἀπὸ νήσων πολλῶν Τάδε λέγει κύριος τῆ Σορ Σὺ εἶπας Ἐγὼ περιέθηκα ἐμαντῆ κάλλος μου.† 4 ἐν καρδίᾳ θαλάσσης τῷ Βεελιμ υἱοὶ σου περιέθηκάν σοι κάλλος.† 5 κέδρος ἐκ Σανιρ ὠκοδομήθη σοι, ταινίαι σανίδων κυπαρίσσου ἐκ τοῦ Λιβάνου ἐλήμφθησαν τοῦ ποιῆσαι σοι ἰστοὺς ἐλατίνους.† 6 ἐκ τῆς Βασανίτιδος ἐποίησαν τὰς κόπας σου, τὰ ἱερά σου ἐποίησαν ἐξ ἐλέφαντος, οἴκους ἁλσώδεις ἀπὸ νήσων τῶν Χεττιν.† 7 βύσσος μετὰ ποικιλίας ἐξ Αἰγύπτου ἐγένετό σοι στρωμνὴ τοῦ περιθεῖναι σοι δόξαν καὶ περιβαλεῖν σε ὑάκινθον καὶ πορφύραν ἐκ τῶν νήσων Ελισαι καὶ ἐγένετο περιβόλαιά σου.† 8 καὶ οἱ ἄρχοντες σου οἱ κατοικοῦντες Σιδῶνα καὶ Ἀράδιο ἐγένοντο κωπηλάται σου· οἱ σοφοὶ σου, Σορ, οἱ ἦσαν ἐν σοί, οὗτοι κυβερνήται σου.†

27.1 The word of the Lord came to me: 2 Now you, mortal, raise a lamentation over Tyre, 3 and say to Tyre, which sits at the entrance to the sea, merchant of the peoples on many coastlands, Thus says the Lord God: O Tyre, you have said, “I am perfect in beauty.” 4 Your borders are in the heart of the seas; your builders made perfect your beauty. 5 They made all your planks of fir trees from Senir; they took a cedar from Lebanon to make a mast for you. 6 From oaks of Bashan they made your oars; they made your deck of pines from the coasts of Cyprus, inlaid with ivory. 7 Of fine embroidered linen from Egypt was your sail, serving as your ensign; blue and purple from the coasts of Elishah was your awning. 8 The inhabitants of Sidon and Arvad were your rowers; skilled men of Zemerb were within you, they were your pilots.

**Ezek. 17:26-36.** 26 ἐν ὕδατι πολλῷ ἦγόν σε οἱ κωπηλάται σου· τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ νότου συνέτριψέν σε ἐν καρδίᾳ θαλάσσης.† 27 ἦσαν δυνάμεις σου καὶ ὁ μισθός σου καὶ τῶν συμμίκτων σου καὶ οἱ κωπηλάται σου καὶ οἱ κυβερνήται σου καὶ οἱ σύμβουλοί σου καὶ οἱ σύμμικτοί σου ἐκ τῶν συμμίκτων σου καὶ πάντες οἱ ἄνδρες οἱ πολεμισταὶ σου οἱ ἐν σοί καὶ πᾶσα ἡ συναγωγὴ σου ἐν μέσῳ σου, πεσοῦνται ἐν καρδίᾳ θαλάσσης ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῆς πτώσεώς σου.† 28 πρὸς τὴν φωνὴν τῆς κραυγῆς σου οἱ κυβερνήται σου φόβῳ φοβηθήσονται,† 29 καὶ καταβήσονται ἀπὸ τῶν πλοίων πάντες οἱ κωπηλάται σου καὶ οἱ ἐπιβάται καὶ οἱ πρωρεῖς τῆς θαλάσσης ἐπὶ

vv. 1-3 are often labeled a funeral dirge, the similarities to Ezekiel argue also for the label of *prophetic taunt song*. Particularly is this taunting tone prominent in vv. 9-20. This celebrates the downfall of enemies in a taunting manner. Such songs are common throughout the OT: see for example, 1 Sam 17:43, 44; Jer 22:14–15; Isa 23:15–16.<sup>13</sup> In addition, this also constitutes an

τὴν γῆν στήσονται† 30 καὶ ἀλαλάξουσιν ἐπὶ σέ τῆ φωνῆ αὐτῶν καὶ κεκράξονται πικρὸν καὶ ἐπιθήσουσιν ἐπὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν αὐτῶν γῆν καὶ σποδὸν ὑποστρώσονται.† 32 καὶ λήμνονται οἱ υἱοὶ αὐτῶν ἐπὶ σέ θρῆνον καὶ θρήνημά σοι† 33 Πόσον τινὰ εὔρες μισθὸν ἀπὸ τῆς θαλάσσης; ἐνέπλησας ἔθνη ἀπὸ τοῦ πλήθους σου καὶ ἀπὸ τοῦ συμμίκτου σου ἐπλοῦτισας πάντας βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς.† 34 νῦν συνετρίβης ἐν θαλάσῃ, ἐν βάθει ὕδατος· ὁ σύμμικτός σου καὶ πᾶσα ἡ συναγωγὴ σου ἐν μέσῳ σου ἔπεσον, πάντες οἱ κωπηλάται σου.† 35 πάντες οἱ κατοικοῦντες τὰς νήσους ἐστύγνασαν ἐπὶ σέ, καὶ οἱ βασιλεῖς αὐτῶν ἐκστάσει ἐξέστησαν, καὶ ἐδάκρυσεν τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτῶν.† 36 ἔμποροι ἀπὸ ἐθνῶν ἐσύρισάν σε· ἀπώλεια ἐγένου καὶ οὐκέτι ἔση εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα.†

26 Your rowers have brought you into the high seas. The east wind has wrecked you in the heart of the seas. 27 Your riches, your wares, your merchandise, your mariners and your pilots, your caulkers, your dealers in merchandise, and all your warriors within you, with all the company that is with you, sink into the heart of the seas on the day of your ruin. 28 At the sound of the cry of your pilots the countryside shakes, 29 and down from their ships come all that handle the oar. The mariners and all the pilots of the sea stand on the shore 30 and wail aloud over you, and cry bitterly. They throw dust on their heads and wallow in ashes; 31 they make themselves bald for you, and put on sackcloth, and they weep over you in bitterness of soul, with bitter mourning. 32 In their wailing they raise a lamentation for you, and lament over you: “Who was ever destroyed like Tyre in the midst of the sea? 33 When your wares came from the seas, you satisfied many peoples; with your abundant wealth and merchandise you enriched the kings of the earth. 34 Now you are wrecked by the seas, in the depths of the waters; your merchandise and all your crew have sunk with you. 35 All the inhabitants of the coastlands are appalled at you; and their kings are horribly afraid, their faces are convulsed. 36 The merchants among the peoples hiss at you; you have come to a dreadful end and shall be no more forever.

<sup>13</sup>“The first section, vv 1–3, though often referred to as a funeral dirge or lament, is in fact a prophetic taunt song, though the latter is very probably a development of the former with the addition of a mocking tone (Eissfeldt, Introduction, 91); the victory song is also similar in that it incorporates themes from the taunt song. The angel serves as the leader of the ritual lament by making a public announcement of the ‘death,’ a formal feature of ancient Israelite ritual laments (Jahnow, Leichenlied, 101, 138, 167). Taunt songs have no fixed form but are characterized by derision and joy over the (past, present, or future) misfortunes and shortcomings of others (see 1 Sam 17:43, 44; Jer 22:14–15; Isa 23:15–16). In Isa 37:22–29, for example, Hezekiah taunts Sennacherib. Taunt songs were taken up by OT prophets for deriding the enemies of Israel and announcing their downfall (Isa 23–24, 47; Jer 50–51; Ezek 26–27). This taunt consists first of an angelic announcement anticipating the fall of Babylon (vv 1–3). The opening words, ‘Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great,’ are derived from Isa 21:9, yet the form of 18:1–3 is closer to Amos 5:1–3 (Jahnow, Leichenlied, 219), which is also cast in the form of the funerary lament, where the ini-

angelic speech, which is one of nine such instances in Revelation: 7:2–3; 10:1–7; 14:6–7; 14:8; 14:9–11; 14:14–16; 14:18–20; 18:1–3; 19:17–18.<sup>14</sup>

The interruption of the lament (vv. 1-3, 9-20) by vv. 4-8 follows an *OT prophetic summons to flight literary pattern*.<sup>15</sup> Such warnings to the people of God are giv- tial announcement of the fall of Israel is followed by a clause providing the reason for that fall.” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 976.

<sup>14</sup>Formally considered, Rev 18:1–3 is an angelic speech, a form that occurs nine times in Revelation (7:2–3; 10:1–7; 14:6–7; 14:8; 14:9–11; 14:14–16; 14:18–20; 18:1–3; 19:17–18; see Form/Structure/Setting on Rev 7) and is often inserted immediately after an angelic epiphany (see also Form/Structure/Setting on Rev 7). The angelic speech in Revelation exhibits the following structural features: (1) introductory phrase: καὶ εἶδον, ‘I saw’ (18:1; see 7:2; 10:1; 14:6; 14:14; 19:17); (2) object of vision: ἄλλον ἄγγελον, ‘another angel’ (18:1; see 7:2; 10:1; 14:6; 14:8; 14:9; 14:15; 14:18; 19:17); (3) the angel moves (ascends, descends, flies, emerges) to the center of the action (18:1; see 7:2; 10:1; 14:6; 14:8; 14:9; 14:15; 14:18; 19:17); (4) the angel ‘cries with a loud voice’ (18:2a; see 7:2; 10:3; 14:7; 14:9; 14:15; 14:18; 19:17); and (5) the angel utters a brief statement (18:2b–3; see 7:3; 10:3; 14:7; 14:8; 14:9b–11; 14:15b; 14:18b; 19:17b–18). The frequent occurrence of this literary form in Revelation and its general absence elsewhere strongly suggest that 18:1–3 comes from the hand of the author-editor of Revelation.” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 977.]

<sup>15</sup>Rev 18:4–8, which interrupts the continuity of the ritual lament in vv 1–3 and 9–20, is attributed to an unidentified ‘heavenly voice,’ which mentions the future fall of Babylon. It conforms to a particular prophetic form found in the OT, the summons to flight (Aufforderung zur Flucht), consisting of an initial summons to flee (vv 4–5) followed by a threat of judgment (vv 6–8). Though found in earlier historical narratives (1 Sam 15:6; 22:5), the form is most often found in the writing prophets, particularly Jeremiah (e.g., Jer 4:4–5; 6:1; 48:6–8). Flight from Babylon is specifically enjoined in Jer 50:8–10; 51:6–10; 51:45–48 (a later addition to the Hebrew text); Isa 48:20–22 (using imagery from the flight from Egypt); and Isa 52:11–12. The form is also found in Christian prophecies (Mark 13:14–20; Eusebius Hist. eccl. 3.5.3; Epiphanius Haer. 29.7; 30.2; De mens. et pond. 15 [Migne, PG, 43.261B]; see Matt 2:13, 19–20; Aune, Prophecy, 311–12). The command ‘Come out of her!’ (v 4b) is followed by the reason for the command (v 5), an encouragement to pay back Rome double for what she has done (v 6). The reason for leaving the city is because of the imminent arrival of plagues: disease, famine, and conflagration (vv 4cd, 8). In the present context these plagues must be those associated with the seven trumpets and seven bowls. Sandwiched in between the threats of v 6 and v 8 is a brief monologue attributed to Babylon-Rome in v 7b, intended to dramatize the claim made in v 7a that she has ‘glorified herself and lived sensually’ and should therefore be repaid by torment and grief. In v 7b Babylon-Rome personified says in her heart, ‘I sit as queen ... m not a widow; / sorrow will I never see.’ The hubris of Babylon-Rome is brought home to the reader clearly and forcefully through this brief speech. A similar rhetorical device is the more lengthy monologue attributed to Jerusalem personified as a widow and as a mother bereft of her children in Bar 4:9b–16. The humility and degradation of this speech contrast vividly with the pride of the speech of Babylon-Rome in 18:7b.” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas:

en by Jeremiah and Isaiah. Plus similar warnings come in Mark 13:14–20 (cf. also Mt. 2:13, 19–20).

John reaches back into his Jewish heritage to depict the downfall of Rome in apocalyptic tones. Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Isaiah provide him with models to follow in casting both the angelic speech and the warning of the heavenly voice.

**Literary Setting:** The subunits in 18:1–19:10 are both easy and difficult to define clearly. The shifting of verb tense provides one helpful signal. It be charted out as follows:

**Vv. 1-3:** overwhelmingly past time verbs cast into a future time frame but presented as though the event has already happened. Babylon’s past character and actions led to its downfall.

Narrative Intro: εἶδον, ἐφωτίσθη, aorist (past)

Speech: ἔπεσεν, ἐγένετο, aorist (past); πέπικαν, perfect (past); ἐπόρνευσαν, ἐπλούτησαν aorist (past)

**Vv. 4-8,** all of the main clause verbs are imperative forms and demand actions in the immediate future time. The past and present tense verse are in secondary clauses and provide support for the imperative demands.

Narrative Intro: ἤκουσα, aorist (past)

Speech: **ἐξέλθατε imperative (future);** συγκοινωνήσητε, λάβητε, subjunctive (future); ἐκολλήθησαν, ἐμνημόνευσεν, aorist (past); **ἀπόδοτε, imperative (future); διπλώσατε, imperative (future);** ἐκέρασεν, aorist (past); **κεράσατε, imperative (future);** ἐδόξασεν, ἐστρηνίασεν, aorist (past); **δότε, imperative (future);** λέγει, present (present); κάθημαι, present (present); εἰμι, present (present); ἴδω, perfect (present).

**Vv. 9-20.** No narrative intro is provided signaling the source of the narrative depictions and the speeches. The future tense verbs which dominate the main clause expressions project a future judgment of Babylon leading to funeral laments over her destruction.

Speech: **κλαύσουσιν, κόψονται, future (future);** βλέπωσιν, subjunctive (future); ἐστηκότες, perfect (future); ἦλθεν, aorist (past); **κλαίουσιν, πενθοῦσιν, present (future); ἀγοράζει, present (future);** ἀπῆλθεν, ἀπώλετο, aorist (past); **εὕρησουσιν, στήσονται, future (future);** ἠρημώθη, aorist (past); ἐργάζονται, present (present); ἔστησαν, aorist (past); ἔκραζον, imperfect (past); ἔβαλον, aorist (past); ἔκραζον, imperfect (past); ἐπλούτησαν, aorist (past); ἠρημώθη, aorist (past); **Εὐφραίνου, imperative (future);** ἔκρινεν, aorist (past);

**Vv. 21-24.** The speech projects impending divine Word, Incorporated, 1998), 977–978.]

judgment and the narrative intro projects this as though it has already happened.

Narrative Intro: ἦρεν, ἔβαλεν, aorist (past)  
 Speech: βληθήσεται, future (future); εὔρεθῆ, ἀκουσθῆ, εὔρεθῆ, ἀκουσθῆ, φάνη, ἀκουσθῆ, subjunctive (future); ἦσαν, imperfect (past); ἐπλανήθησαν, aorist (past); εὔρέθη, aorist (past).

The shifting between past and future time frames can be quit confusing to the reader. But in true apocalyptic prophetic patterns John moves his readers across these time barriers with great ease, in part because the [Hebrew language](#) had little concern for these time distinctions and easily flowed across them. In order to create this in Koine Greek John resorted to a wide variety of verb constructions as is illustrated in the above chart. It should be remembered that the action fall of Babylon is not described until 19:11-21. This becomes the first of several depictions in chapters nineteen and twenty of final judgment which will usher in the eternal order.

One of the patterns already established in Revelation is that impending divine judgment will be celebrated in advance of it actually happening in the apocalyptic narrative. In part this asserts the certainty of that divine wrath falling upon evil, and thus can be celebrated ahead of time.

The larger setting of 18:1-19:10 is also linked to chapter 17 where Babylon's destruction is portrayed

under the image of her as a whore. There her alliance with the beast is underscored. Earlier her downfall is anticipated especially in the sixth and seventh bowls of wrath (16:12-16; 17-21). Babylon as a code term for Rome and all the evil that both the city and the empire symbolized is made clear several times through this material. Thus Rome comes to symbolically signify the concentration of evil that will dominate world history toward the end of time. John in developing his themes in Revelation has steadily built a growing emphasis upon the increasing power of evil that is projected to reach its high point just prior to the end of time with God's judgment falling upon all humanity, along with all supernatural evil powers. 16:12-19:10 intensifies that emergence of evil concentrated in people but driven by supernatural powers, all of which stand in opposition to God and to His people. God's people on earth will suffer immensely under this evil power opposing them, and many will die for their faith. But even in death, victory awaits them with the bliss of heaven and the overpowering Presence of Almighty God.

**Literary Structure:** In the block diagram below the distinctive structures of the first two subunits of vv. 1-3 and 4-8 can be clearly observed. Both the narrative introductions to each and the direct discourse materials are set off visually so that they can be more readily understood in the examination of their content.

18.1            After these things  
**512            I saw another angel**  
    coming down  
    out of heaven  
    possessing great authority,  
    and  
**513            the earth was illumined**  
    out of its glory.

18.2            And  
**514            he cried out**  
    in a loud voice  
    saying,  
**A                                    has fallen**  
**B                                    has fallen Babylon**  
    the great,  
    and  
**C                                    has become a dwelling place**  
    of demons,  
    and  
**D                                    --- ----- a prison**  
    of every unclean spirit  
    and  
**E                                    --- ----- a prison**  
    of every unclean bird  
    and



**F**

--- ----- **a prison**

| of every beast  
 | unclean  
 | and  
 | detested  
 | out of the wine  
 | of the wrath  
 | /-----|  
 | of its immorality  
 18.3 because...all the nations have drunk  
 | with her  
 the kings of the earth...have committed immorality  
 | and  
 | out of the power  
 | /-----|  
 | of her luxury  
 the merchants of the earth...have become rich.

18.4 And

**515 I heard another voice**

out of heaven  
saying,

**G**

**Come out**

My people  
 of her  
 lest you join in her sins,  
 and  
 of her plagues  
 lest you receive  
 18.5 because her sins are piled up  
 to heaven  
 and  
 God has remembered her iniquities.

**H**

18.6

**Give back to her**

as she also has given back  
and

**I**

**repay double**

according to her deeds

in the cup

which she has mixed

**J**

**mix to her a double portion**

18.7

as much as she glorified herself

| and

| she has lived in luxury

**K**

**such give to her toment and pain**

in her heart

because...she says,

"I rule as a queen

and

I am no widow

and

I will never know pain."

because of this  
in one hour

**L**

**her plagues will come**

death

and

mourning

and

famine

and

with fire

**M**

**she will be burned**

because mighty is the Lord God

Who judges her.

## SUMMARY OF RHETORICAL STRUCTURE

The core structure is well defined by the actions/speech of first the angel (#s 512-514) and then by the heavenly voice (# 515). The narrative intro for the angel is longer (#s512-513), but his speech is shorter (#s. A-F) in comparison to that of the heavenly voice (#s G-M). The angel's speech is an indictment of Babylon, while that of the heavenly voice is a sentence of doom. The diagram reveals the quasi poetic pattern of both speeches that reflect the OT literary forms discussed above in the [Genre](#) section.

### Exegesis of the Text:

Quite clearly the block diagram reveals the only legitimate way of developing an exegetical outline for the passage. One of the patterns shared in common between these two heavenly beings is a introduction to them by John that is followed by a summation of their speech. This becomes important to note because the pattern shifts in verse nine. The distinctive literary genres of the speech summations contribute to both the content and the perspectives taken by each divine being.

### A. The angel's indictment, vv. 1-3.

18.1 Μετά ταῦτα εἶδον ἄλλον ἄγγελον καταβαίνοντα ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἔχοντα ἐξουσίαν μεγάλην, καὶ ἡ γῆ ἐφωτίσθη ἐκ τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ. 2 καὶ ἔκραξεν ἐν ἰσχυρᾷ φωνῇ λέγων· ἔπεσεν ἔπεσεν Βαβυλῶν ἡ μεγάλη, καὶ ἐγένετο κατοικητήριον δαιμονίων καὶ φυλακὴ παντός πνεύματος ἀκαθάρτου καὶ φυλακὴ παντός ὀρνέου ἀκαθάρτου [καὶ φυλακὴ παντός θηρίου ἀκαθάρτου] καὶ μεμισημένου, 3 ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς πέπωκαν πάντα τὰ ἔθνη καὶ οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς μετ' αὐτῆς ἐπόρνευσαν καὶ οἱ ἔμποροι τῆς γῆς ἐκ τῆς δυνάμεως τοῦ στρήνου αὐτῆς ἐπλούτησαν.

18.1 After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority; and the earth was made bright with his splendor. 2 He called out with a mighty voice, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! It

has become a dwelling place of demons, a haunt of every foul spirit, a haunt of every foul bird, a haunt of every foul and hateful beast. 3 For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have grown rich from the power of her luxury."

Note the longer intro to the speech here than is true in the heavenly voice segment below. Plus the speech is longer in the second segment as well.

**Narrative Introduction, vv. 1-2a.** Μετά ταῦτα εἶδον ἄλλον ἄγγελον καταβαίνοντα ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἔχοντα ἐξουσίαν μεγάλην, καὶ ἡ γῆ ἐφωτίσθη ἐκ τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ. καὶ ἔκραξεν ἐν ἰσχυρᾷ φωνῇ λέγων· καὶ ἔκραξεν ἐν ἰσχυρᾷ φωνῇ λέγων, After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority; and the earth was made bright with his splendor. He called out with a mighty voice,

The literary function of Μετά ταῦτα is as a discourse marker introducing a new topic: cf. 4:1; 7:1, 9; 15:5; 18:1; 19:1. Content wise the prepositional phrase signals the next item after the previous depiction of Babylon as a whore (17:1-18). As is uniformly true in all the uses of Μετά ταῦτα, the sequence is not temporal but logical, i.e., the next item; not, the next event.

The core statement is εἶδον ἄλλον ἄγγελον καταβαίνοντα ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, I saw another angel coming down out of heaven. The ἄλλον ἄγγελον, other angel, identifies this angel as distinct from the interpreting angel in the previous vision: εἷς ἐκ τῶν ἑπτὰ ἀγγέλων, one of the seven angels (17:1). Additionally εἶδον signals a new vision for vv. 1-3, while ἤκουσα ἄλλην φωνήν, I heard another voice, in v. 4 signals an audition for vv. 4-20, which is distinct from John's seeing the ἄλλον ἄγγελον (v. 1; cf. 7:2; 14:6; also 19:17). This will also stand distinct from εἷς ἄγγελος ἰσχυρὸς, one mighty angel (v. 21; cf. also 5:2; 10:1).

This different angel that John now sees in v. 1 is καταβαίνοντα ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, coming down out of heaven, as John sees it; cf. 20:1 where another angel descends out of heaven with the key to the abyss in order to seize

the dragon and lock him up. This angel in 18:1 who descends to the earth from heaven also ἔχοντα ἐξουσίαν μεγάλην, *has great authority*. In 14:18, καὶ ἄλλος ἄγγελος [ἐξῆλθεν] ἐκ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου [ὁ] ἔχων ἐξουσίαν ἐπὶ τοῦ πυρός, *and another angel came out of the altar who had authority over fire*. This angel called out for a harvesting of the grapes, ‘the evil people,’ on the earth to be cast into the grape press, a symbol of divine judgment as an expression of the wrath of God.

The signal of the ἐξουσίαν μεγάλην, great authority, of this other angel is καὶ ἡ γῆ ἐφωτίσθη ἐκ τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ, *and the earth was made bright out of its glory*. This phrase is relatively close to one in Ezek. 43:2, יְרֵאֵהוּ הַיְרֵאֵהוּ (καὶ ἡ γῆ ἐξέλαμπεν ὡς φέγγος ἀπὸ τῆς δόξης κυκλόθεν) *and the earth shone with His glory*.<sup>16</sup> This is the only place in Revelation where τῆς δόξης, divine Presence, is attributed to an angel rather than to either God or Christ. But the attribution is found elsewhere in Ezek. 9:3; 10:4; 18:22; Heb. 9:5 and Sir. 49:8. The point here is to underscore the full authority and power of God upon the angel. Thus it is out of this divine presence that the earth is lit up like a bolt of lightning would light up the sky.

Once everyone notices this supernatural presence in the sky that is shining brightly like the sun, the angel καὶ ἔκραξεν ἐν ἰσχυρᾷ φωνῇ λέγων, *cried out in a mighty voice saying*. Heavenly beings speaking loudly seems to be commonplace in Revelation: 1:10, 15; 4:1; 5:2, 11, 12; 6:1, 10; 7:2, 10; 8:13; 10:3; 11:12, 15; 12:10; 14:2, 7, 9, 15; 16:1, 17; 18:2; 19:1, 6; 19:17; 21:3. A couple of depictions for angels express this, from ἰσχυρᾷ φωνῇ, *in a mighty voice* (18:2, 21), to φωνῇ μεγάλῃ, *in a loud voice* (5:2, 12; 7:2; 14:7, 9, 18; 19:17). Interestingly **A** the adjective ἰσχυρός, -ά, -όν, also **B** qualifies ἄγγελος as well as his voice: 10:1; 18:21. Angels especially tend to **C** ἔκραξεν, *cry out*, as well as simply **D** λέγει, *speaks*: κράζω, 7:2; 14:15; 18:2; 19:17, in comparison to λέγει, 10:9; **D** 14:8, 13; 16:5; 19:9; 22:9. When an angel speaks to John, it is λέγει, *speaks*, but otherwise it is ἔκραξεν, *cry* **E**

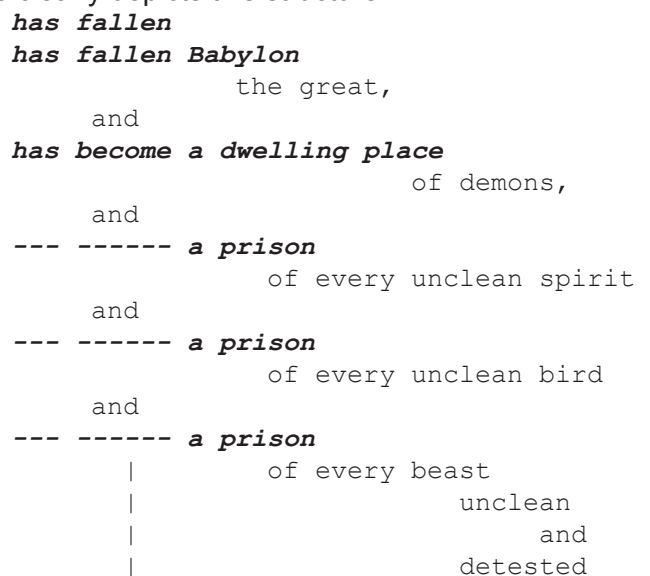
<sup>16</sup>“This phrase is a relatively close rendering of the Hebrew text of Ezek 43:2, ‘the earth shone with his glory’ (referring, however, to Yahweh), which exhibits several differences from the LXX version (Vanhoye, Bib 43 [1962] 437). This is the only instance in Revelation in which an angelic being is described as having δόξα, ‘glory, splendor,’ a term usually reserved as a designation for the presence of God (Rev 15:8; 21:11, 23; see Comment on 15:8). The attribution of δόξα or כְּבוֹד kābōd to angelic beings occurs in Ezek 9:3; 10:4, 18, 22; Heb 9:5; cf. Sir 49:8.” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 985.]

*out*. The latter tends to be when the angel is making some kind of announcement to a large number of individuals, mostly on earth from a position in the sky above the earth, but also in heaven.

We must not forget that this is apocalyptic narrative where one heavenly being can speak and the millions of people on earth can all hear the angel at the same time. When angels function inside historical narrative texts elsewhere in the Bible their voice is only heard by the people they are speaking to, either individuals or small groups of people.

**Speech, vv. 2b-3.** 2b ἔπεσεν ἔπεσεν Βαβυλῶν ἡ μεγάλη, καὶ ἐγένετο κατοικητήριον δαιμονίων καὶ φυλακὴ παντὸς πνεύματος ἀκαθάρτου καὶ φυλακὴ παντὸς ὀρνέου ἀκαθάρτου [καὶ φυλακὴ παντὸς θηρίου ἀκαθάρτου] καὶ μεμισημένου, 3 ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς πέπωκαν πάντα τὰ ἔθνη καὶ οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς μετ’ αὐτῆς ἐπόρνευσαν καὶ οἱ ἔμποροι τῆς γῆς ἐκ τῆς δυνάμεως τοῦ στρήνου αὐτῆς ἐπλούτησαν. 2b *“Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! It has become a dwelling place of demons, a haunt of every foul spirit, a haunt of every foul bird, a haunt of every foul and hateful beast.* 3 *For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have grown rich from the power of her luxury.”*

**Pronouncement.** The narrative formatting of the text, as above, obscures the poetic quality contained in the angel’s speech. The text is composed of two parts: a series of declarations in v. 2b and the reason for these declarations in v. 3. The [block diagram above](#) more clearly depicts this structure:



Careful observation here reflects clearly a rhythmic structuring of the six statements. In typical fashion to the OT ritual lament, the angel makes a public announcement of the death of Babylon, but with the accu-

sations (statements #s C-F) adds a note of taunt in the prophetic tradition of Isa. 23-24, 47; Jer. 50-51; Ezek. 26-27. Such 'laments' in ancient Hebrew were usually followed by the giving of a reason for the downfall of the enemy of Israel (cf. v. 3). Amos 5:1-3 is particularly interesting with its 'lament' over the fall of the northern kingdom by a prophet from the southern kingdom:

2 Ἐπεσεν  
 οὐκέτι μὴ προσθῆ  
 τοῦ ἀναστήναι παρθένος τοῦ Ἰσραηλ·  
 ἔσφαλεν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς αὐτῆς,  
 οὐκ ἔστιν ὁ ἀναστήσων αὐτήν.†  
 3 διότι τάδε λέγει κύριος κύριος  
 Ἡ πόλις,  
 ἐξ ἧς ἐξεπορεύοντο χίλιοι,  
 ὑπολειφθήσονται ἑκατόν,  
 καὶ ἐξ ἧς ἐξεπορεύοντο ἑκατόν,  
 ὑπολειφθήσονται δέκα  
 τῷ οἴκῳ Ἰσραηλ.†

2 Fallen,  
 no more to rise,  
 is maiden Israel;  
 forsaken on her land,  
 with no one to raise her up.  
 3 For thus says the Lord God:  
 The city  
 that marched out a thousand  
 shall have a hundred left,  
 and that which marched out a hundred  
 shall have ten left.<sup>17</sup>

Because such laments with taunting tones were not only common among the Israelites but also among most other groups of people in the ancient world, the content and tone of the angel's speech spoke volumes to John's first readers. God's messenger who came out of heaven no less was announcing the destruction of Babylon, just as many of the OT prophets had done as God's messengers centuries before. Especially relevant are the LXX words in Isa. 21:9, Πέπτωκεν Βαβυλῶν, καὶ πάντα τὰ ἀγάλματα αὐτῆς καὶ τὰ χειροποίητα αὐτῆς συνετρίβησαν εἰς τὴν γῆν, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon; and all the images of her gods lie shattered on the ground." The Hebrew text is more explicit in the opening words: נָפְלוּ הַלְלָהּ נָפְלוּ הַלְלָהּ, *Fallen, fallen is Babylon*. Added to this was the depiction that this announcement was being made to all the peoples of the world. Further, this angelic pronouncement of doom reaffirms earlier assurances be-

<sup>17</sup>Here in Amos 5:1-3 (as in Rev 18:1-3) the statement that Israel has fallen is a prophetic anticipation of a future event that will surely come to pass. In this taunt song and in the three laments found in vv 9-19, the rhetorical strategy of the author focuses on the stark contrast between past glory and present devastation. This emphasis on contrast characterizes ritual laments over cities and nations throughout the ancient Mediterranean world." [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 977.]

ginning in 14:8 that God will judge the persecutors of His people: ἔπεσεν ἔπεσεν Βαβυλῶν ἡ μεγάλη ἢ ἐκ τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς πεπότικεν πάντα τὰ ἔθνη. "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, who has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication."

The content of the speech stresses mainly the destruction of Babylon, the code word for evil Rome. The doubled verb ἔπεσεν ἔπεσεν followed by the subject of both verbs Βαβυλῶν gives clear signal of the ritual lament celebrating the destruction of an enemy by God.

After the opening lines comes a series of accusations characterizing Babylon first as ἐγένετο κατοικητήριον δαιμονίων, *the dwelling place of demons*. Strongly echoing the pronouncement of doom on ancient Babylon in Isa. 13:19-22, the angel depicts the rotten character of Rome as a place fit only for demons. This is followed by Babylon as a φυλακὴ for παντὸς πνεύματος ἀκαθάρτου, *of every unclean spirit*; παντὸς ὀρνέου ἀκαθάρτου, *of every unclean bird*; παντὸς θηρίου ἀκαθάρτου καὶ μεμισημένου, *of every unclean and detestable beast*. Thus φυλακὴ is not a prison in the usual sense of the word, but rather a haunt in the manner of Dan 4:25 LXX use of the term.<sup>18</sup>

The repetition of the idea in elliptical format led to problems for copyists in catching all of the instances of φυλακὴ.<sup>19</sup> The evidence does slightly favor includ-  
<sup>18</sup>The word φυλακὴ does not refer to a prison as such but is likely intended to be synonymous with 'habitation' (κατοικητήριον) in the preceding phrase.<sup>150</sup> In addition to 'prison,' one of the predominate senses of φυλακὴ in the ancient Greek world and in the LXX was 'watch' or 'guard' (e.g., Ezek. 27:11; Hab. 2:1).<sup>151</sup> This meaning is also attested in the NT.<sup>152</sup> In this light and against the background of the OT allusions, the word is best rendered in Rev. 18:2 as 'place of watching' or 'haunt.' In confirmation of this Dan. 4:25 LXX describes the place of Nebuchadnezzar's judgment as a φυλακὴ and a 'desert place,' Theod. has 'your dwelling (κατοικία) will be with the beasts of the field.' Dan. 4:25 may even stand as a partial allusion behind Rev. 18:2, since it describes the judgment of a Babylonian king and since 'Babylon the Great,' found earlier in Rev. 18:2, follows only five verses later in Dan. 4:30." [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), 894-895.]

<sup>19</sup>Some mss. omit phrases in this verse because a scribe's eye inadvertently skipped from one phrase beginning with 'and a prison of every' (καὶ φυλακὴ παντός) to the next phrase beginning with the same words. Some omit 'and a prison of every unclean spirit' (1611 pc), others omit 'and a prison of every unclean bird' (A M<sup>A</sup> sy<sup>ph</sup>), and others omit 'and a prison of every unclean beast' (8 C 051 M a vg sy<sup>ph</sup> bo Bea). There is good external support for the last omission, but the phrase should still be considered original since the same scribal error is likely here, though it occurred at an earlier stage of transmission (the clause is included by A 1611 2329 al gig [sy<sup>h</sup> sa Prim]). Schmid points out that the originality of all three phrases is also suggested by the fact that each is partly allusive to either Isa. 13:21-22 or 34:11, 13-14, both of which include

		out of the wine
		of the wrath
		/-----
		of its immorality
because...all the nations have drunk		
		with her
the kings of the earth...have committed immorality		
	and	
		out of the power
		/-----
		of her luxury
the merchants of the earth...have become rich.		

ing all three phrases beginning with φυλακή. Collective these three phrases amplify the disgusting nature of Babylon as a κατοικητήριον δαιμονίων.

In a manner typical of the OT ritual lament, the accusations of evil and doom are followed with a reason, e.g., Amos 5:4 with διότι introducing the reason for the lament in vv. 1-3. This complex ὅτι clause modifies both verbs ἔπεσεν ἔπεσεν and ἐγένετο in the core expressions in v. 2b. It bundles three reasons together in a tight knit expression. The dependent conjunction ὅτι is used rather than the coordinate conjunction γάρ in order to set up the reason as a secondary idea to the main ideas of ἔπεσεν and ἐγένετο: fallen, i.e., turned into, ... because. And three reasons account for the fall of Babylon:

1) *ἐκ τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς πέπωκαν πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, out of the wine of the wrath of her immorality have drunk all the nations.* This statement reproduces much as what was said about Babylon in 14:8, ἔπεσεν ἔπεσεν Βαβυλῶν ἡ μεγάλη ἢ ἐκ τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς πεπότικεν πάντα τὰ ἔθνη. “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, who has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.” The verb πεπότικεν, they have drunk, was confused primarily with either πέπτωκαν, they have fallen, or πέπτωκεν, they have fallen, by several manuscript copyists.<sup>20</sup> These two alternative readings represent a switch from the aorist tense ἔπεσεν, it has fallen, to the perfect tense form of the same verb either in 3rd plural or 3rd singular. These represent careless mistakes in copying.<sup>21</sup> The

all three elements of spirits, birds, and beasts.<sup>1537</sup> [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), 895.]

<sup>20</sup> \* πεπόκεν P 051. 2053\*

| πεπόκεν (vel πεπόκασιν) & A C 046. 1006\*. 1611. 1841. 2030 M<sup>k</sup>

| πεπόκεν 1854. 2053c. 2062 sy<sup>hmg</sup>

| txt (vel πεπόκασιν) 1006c. 2329 latt sy<sup>h</sup>

[Eberhard Nestle and Erwin Nestle, *Nestle-Aland: NTG Apparatus Criticus*, ed. Barbara Aland et al., 28. revidierte Auflage. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012), 775.]

<sup>21</sup>“On the one hand, the most strongly supported readings, πέπτωκαν (A C 69 2031) and πεπόκασιν (& 046 about 50 minuscules including 1006<sup>c</sup> vid 1611 cop<sup>sa, bo</sup> al), are scarcely suitable in

adopted reading has less external support but seems to be mandated internally by context and parallels to 14:8 along with similar prophet images.

Babylon must come down in God’s judgment due to its seductive corrupting influence upon all the other nations.<sup>22</sup> The term τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ, of the wine of the wrath, references God’s wrath in light of previous statements:<sup>23</sup> 14:19, ἔβαλεν εἰς τὴν ληνὸν τοῦ θυμοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ τὸν μέγαν, he threw it into the great wine press of the wrath of God; 16:19b, καὶ Βαβυλῶν ἡ μεγάλη ἐμνήσθη ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ δοῦναι αὐτῇ τὸ ποτήριον τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς ὀργῆς αὐτοῦ, and gave her the wine-cup of the fury of his wrath.<sup>24</sup>

2) καὶ οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς μετ’ αὐτῆς ἐπόρνευσαν.

the context and seem to have arisen from a mechanical conformation to ἔπεσεν in ver. 2. On the other hand, the sense of the passage, as well as prophetic imagery (Jr 25:15 [= LXX 32:15] f.; 51:7, 39 [= LXX 28:7, 39]), seems to demand some form of the verb ‘to drink,’ or ‘to make drunken’ (compare Re 14:8). Among such readings a majority of the Committee preferred πέπωκαν (1828 2321), which can also be said to be supported by a variety of versional and patristic evidence, as well as by the Greek witnesses that read πεπόκασιν or πέπωκεν (which are morphological or grammatical improvements of πέπωκαν).” [Bruce Manning Metzger, United Bible Societies, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, Second Edition a Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies’ Greek New Testament (4th Rev. Ed.) (London; New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 683.

<sup>22</sup>“the wine of the wrath of her fornication: Here, ‘fornication’ is not only idolatry but wanton luxury.” [Wilfrid J. Harrington, *Revelation*, ed. Daniel J. Harrington, vol. 16, Sacra Pagina Series (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2008), 177.]

<sup>23</sup>“LXX Jer 32:15 (MT 25:15) (cf. 32:17 [MT 25:17]) says, Λαβὲ τὸ ποτήριον τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ ἀκράτου τούτου ἐκ χειρὸς μου καὶ ποτιεῖς πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, ‘Take the cup of this unmixed wine from my hand and cause all the nations to drink.’ Isa 51:17 uses the metaphor τὸ ποτήριον τοῦ θυμοῦ, ‘the cup of wrath.’ Greeks typically mixed wine with water in a vessel called a κρατήρ, ‘mixer’; they considered unmixed wine extremely potent (Diodorus Siculus 4.3.4; Athenaeus Deipn. 2.38c).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 987.]

<sup>24</sup>“The awkward Greek genitive construction (‘the wine of the wrath of her fornication’) seems to be a compressed way of speaking about collusion, thereby earning the wrath of God.” [Duane F. Watson, “Revelation,” in *New Interpreter’s Bible*, ed. Leander E. Keck, vol. 12 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994–2004), 692.]

**and the kings of the earth with her have committed immorality.** The second reason is closely linked to the first. She has seduced the kings of the earth into corruption. In the background here stands the imagery of Isa. 23:17:

καὶ ἔσται μετὰ ἑβδομήκοντα ἔτη ἐπισκοπήν ποιήσει ὁ θεὸς Τύρου, καὶ πάλιν ἀποκατασταθήσεται εἰς τὸ ἀρχαῖον **καὶ ἔσται ἐμπόριον πάσαις ταῖς βασιλείαις τῆς οἰκουμένης.**<sup>†</sup>

At the end of seventy years, the Lord will visit Tyre, and she will return to her trade, **and will prostitute herself with all the kingdoms of the world on the face of the earth.**

This idea is repeated in abbreviated form in v. 9, οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς οἱ μετ' αὐτῆς πορνεύσαντες καὶ στρηνιάσαντες, **the kings of the earth who have committed immorality and lived in luxury with her.** Additionally the same idea surfaced in 17:2, μεθ' ἧς ἐπόρνευσαν οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς, **with whom the kings of the earth have committed immorality.**

The image of Babylon as a whore in chapter 17 stands heavily behind this image here as a symbol of the corrupting influence of the city morally upon the leaders of the vassal kingdoms that were a part of the Roman empire in John's day. Unquestionably the hugely immoral lifestyles of almost all of the Roman emperors which then legitimized such immorality among the wealthy and aristocratic segments of society was in the thinking of John with this image. The readers in Asia would have quickly identified it with the identical lifestyle of the wealthy and politically powerful in this province.<sup>25</sup>

3) **καὶ οἱ ἔμποροι τῆς γῆς ἐκ τῆς δυνάμεως τοῦ στρήνου αὐτῆς ἐπλούτησαν, and the merchants of the earth out of the power of her luxury have grown rich.** This third reason for the doom of Babylon is the corrupting

<sup>25</sup>“In the OT, the term זָנָא *zānā*, ‘fornicate, be a prostitute,’ is frequently used in a figurative sense of Israel's faithless behavior through frequent lapses into idolatry, a judgment based on the larger metaphor of the ‘marriage’ between Yahweh and Israel presupposed in many OT texts (Lev 17:7; 20:5–6; Num 14:33; 15:39; Deut 31:16; Judg 2:17; 8:27; 1 Chr 5:25; 2 Chr 21:11; Ps 73:27; Hos 1:2; 2:4[MT 6]; 4:15; 9:1; Jer 2:20; 3:2, 9, 13; 5:7, 11; 13:27; Ezek 6:9; 16; 23; 43:7, 9; see Erlandsson, TDOT 4:101–4). However, since Yahweh and Babylon have no such ‘marriage’ relationship, this language has nothing to do with the author's condemnation of Babylon-Rome. There are instances in the OT where the metaphor of prostitution is applied instead to the commercial trade of a city (Kuhn, TDNT 1:515 n. 11), perhaps because economic ties frequently led to the exchange of religious practices (Mic 1:7; Nah 3:4; 2 Kgs 9:22). In Isa 23:17, Tyre's commercial contacts are called ‘prostitution,’ and the profits of such trade are called ‘the price of a prostitute,’ while in Nah 3:4–7 Nineveh is denounced for her sexual debauchery and sorcery.” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 988.]

influence of wealth upon those doing trade with Rome.<sup>26</sup>

A similar image shows up in v. 15a, Οἱ ἔμποροι τούτων οἱ πλουτήσαντες ἀπ' αὐτῆς, **the merchants of these wares who have grown rich from her.** The wealth of Babylon / Rome shows up four times in this chapter in a negative manner: vv. 3, 9, 16–17, and 19.<sup>27</sup> This four fold mention of wealth here has its counter part in Ezek. 27: 12, 18, 27, 33. This chapter contributes heavily to

<sup>26</sup>“The ‘merchants of the earth,’ however, must include those involved with seafaring (see Comments on vv 17b–19) since that was the primary means for transporting merchandise from east to west. The Romans (paradigmatic landlubbers) had a fear of the sea that was reflected in Latin literature in a constellation of related topoi (K. F. Smith, Tibullus, 246–47; Beagon, Roman Nature, 159–61, 177–201). The unpredictable and destructive character of the sea meant that seafarers were fools attempting to do what was contrary to nature and against the will of the gods, and therefore impious (Horace Odes 1.3.23; Propertius 1.17.13; Seneca Medea 328; Pliny Hist. nat. 12.87; 19.3–6). Every ship was an insult to the sea and a deliberate challenge to the gods (Seneca Medea 340, 605, 668; Lucan 3, 193). The primary motive for seafaring was thought to be greed: ‘Nature has spread out the sea as a trap for the covetous’ (Propertius 3.7.37 [tr. G. Lee, Tibullus: Elegies, 2nd ed. (Liverpool: Cairns, 1982) ad loc.]; Tibullus 1.3.39–40; cf. 1.9.9; 2.3.39; Euripides Iphigeneia Taur. 410; Seneca Medea 361; Pliny Hist. nat. 2.118). Conceptions of the golden age pointedly did not include seafaring: *improba navigii ratio tum caeca iacebat*, ‘Then the wanton art of sailing lay as yet unknown’ (Lucretius De rerum natura 5.1006; cf. 2.552–68; 5.1000–13; Tibullus 1.3.35–40; Seneca Hipp. 530; Hesiod Works 236). The Roman view that seafarers were moral reprobates (Cicero De officiis 1.150) is also reflected in Hellenistic authors such as Philostratus Vita Apoll. 4.32 (LCL tr.; cf. Wettstein, Novum Testamentum 2:831).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 988–989.]

<sup>27</sup>“The theme of the wealth of Babylon-Rome occurs four times in this chapter: vv 3, 9, 16–17, and 19. This wealth was based on tax revenue, approximately 10 percent of the gross national product of the empire, from a low estimate of ca. 112 million silver denarii under Augustus (Frank, Economic Survey 5:7) to as much as 200 million silver denarii (Hopkins, JRS 70 [1980] 119). The inflow of tribute cash from the provinces was approximately balanced by the outflow of cash in private trade; that is, it caused the volume of trade in the Roman empire to increase greatly (Hopkins, JRS 70 [1980] 126; cf. Goldsmith, Review of Income and Wealth 30 [1984] 263; Millar, Near East, 49–50). The city of Rome, the center of imperial government, and the outer ring of provinces required an expensive military presence. They were not self-supporting but depended on imported tax revenues from the richer provinces such as Spain, northern Africa, southern Gaul, Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt (Hopkins, JRS 70 [1980] 101). It is certainly interesting that no allusion to Roman taxation, including the sometimes excessive zeal and extortionate practices of the tax farmers, occurs in Rev 18. Of course, taxes could be sent to Rome in cash or in kind (e.g., olive oil from Spain; wheat from Egypt and North Africa), though the transportation of such goods was expensive. Taxes in kind, as opposed to taxes in currency, did not stimulate trade since they flowed from the taxpayer to the tax-consumer.” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 989.]

several images found in chapter eighteen here. The denunciation of wealth and the wealthy is common throughout the Bible.<sup>28</sup>

The corrupting image of Babylon / Rome is continued in vv. 1-3 with the angel in the pattern of a prophetic taunt via a funeral dirge form. The fall of Babylon is proclaimed to all the world by the angel. Here the corrupting influence of Rome via morals and wealth stands as a major reason for her doom. Believers caught up in a quest for wealth need to take a close look at passages such as this.

## B. The sentence from the heavenly voice, vv. 4-8.

4 Καὶ ἤκουσα ἄλλην φωνὴν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ λέγουσαν· ἐξέλθατε ὁ λαός μου ἐξ αὐτῆς ἵνα μὴ συγκοινωνήσητε ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις αὐτῆς, καὶ ἐκ τῶν πληγῶν αὐτῆς ἵνα μὴ λάβητε, 5 ὅτι ἐκολλήθησαν αὐτῆς αἱ ἁμαρτίαι ἄχρι τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ ἐμνημόνευσεν ὁ

<sup>28</sup>“The wealth and luxury of Babylon-Rome is referred to four times in this chapter (18:3, 9, 16–17, 19), reflecting the fourfold mention of wealth found in Ezek 27 (vv 12, 18, 27, 33), which served as a literary model for much of Rev 18. The OT and subsequent Jewish literature contain occasional denunciations of the wealthy for a variety of reasons (cf. Hengel, *Eigentum*, 20–27 [ET 12–22]) — their dishonest and violent practices (Amos 5:11; LXX Ps 75:5; Sir 13:13), their complacency (Amos 6:4–6), and their arrogance (Isa 2:7–9; 3:16–26; 5:8–10; Sir 13:20; 1 Enoch 46:7; 94:8; 97:8–9; Sib. Or 3.179–82, 350–488) — though wealth in and of itself does not have a negative connotation (Schmidt, *Wealth*, 49–60 [OT], 61–102 [Jewish non-canonical sources]). Schmidt argues convincingly that positive and negative evaluations of wealth exist side by side in Jewish as well as Greco-Roman prophetic, wisdom, and philosophical texts because hostility to wealth is a fundamental religious-ethical tenet that exists independently of actual socio-economic circumstances (*Wealth*, 164 and *passim*). Similarly, the OT and early Jewish literature contain occasional denunciations of merchants, not for their wealth but for the dishonest practices they used to gouge the poor (Jer 5:26–28; Hos 12:7; Amos 8:4–6; Mic 6:10–12; Sir 26:29–27:3; 37:11; 42:5). The term ‘poor’ (עָנִי *‘ānī*), meaning one wrongfully impoverished, is the antonym of ‘violent,’ not ‘rich’ (Bammel, TDNT 6:888). However, the wealth of political units (primarily cities) is occasionally criticized for the pride and self-satisfaction that accompany such wealth, as in Hos 12:8, “Ephraim has said, ‘Ah, I am rich, I have gained wealth for myself; in all of my gain no offense has been found in me that would be sin’” (cf. 1 Enoch 98:2–3). The teaching of Jesus, however, does contain a radical critique of wealth (Luke 12:13 = Matt 6:24; Luke 7:22 = Matt 11:5; Luke 6:20; Luke 6:24–25; 12:16–21; Mark 10:23–25 = Matt 19:23–24 = Luke 18:24–25; 2 Cor 8:9; see Hengel, *Eigentum*, 31–38 [ET 23–30]; Schmidt, *Wealth*, 102–62). Nowhere in Rev 18, however, is there a hint of an economic reversal of the type occasionally found in Jewish apocalyptic texts (Sib. Or 3.531–32, 657, 750, 783; 2 Apoc. Bar. 70:4). In fact, Rev 18 does not deal with the issue of economic exploitation at all (Provan, JSNT 64 [1996] 87). Latin literature itself contains occasional denunciations of the Roman desire for luxury, often seen as a betrayal of the spartan values of the earlier Roman republic (Petronius *Satyricon* 119.1–36).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 990.]

θεὸς τὰ ἀδικήματα αὐτῆς. 6 ἀπόδοτε αὐτῇ ὡς καὶ αὐτὴ ἀπέδωκεν καὶ διπλώσατε τὰ διπλᾶ κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτῆς, ἐν τῷ ποτηρίῳ ᾧ ἐκέρασεν κεράσατε αὐτῇ διπλοῦν, 7 ὅσα ἐδόξασεν αὐτὴν καὶ ἐστρηνίασεν, τοσοῦτον δότε αὐτῇ βασανισμόν καὶ πένθος, ὅτι ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ αὐτῆς λέγει ὅτι κάθημαι βασίλισσα καὶ χήρα οὐκ εἰμί καὶ πένθος οὐ μὴ ἴδω. 8 διὰ τοῦτο ἐν μιᾷ ἡμέρᾳ ἤξουσιν αἱ πληγαὶ αὐτῆς, θάνατος καὶ πένθος καὶ λιμός, καὶ ἐν πυρὶ κατακαυθήσεται, ὅτι ἰσχυρὸς κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ κρίνας αὐτήν.

4 Then I heard another voice from heaven saying, “Come out of her, my people, so that you do not take part in her sins, and so that you do not share in her plagues; 5 for her sins are heaped high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. 6 Render to her as she herself has rendered, and repay her double for her deeds; mix a double draught for her in the cup she mixed. 7 As she glorified herself and lived luxuriously, so give her a like measure of torment and grief. Since in her heart she says, ‘I rule as a queen; I am no widow, and I will never see grief,’ 8 therefore her plagues will come in a single day— pestilence and mourning and famine— and she will be burned with fire; for mighty is the Lord God who judges her.”

Once again the twofold subunit pattern is followed here from the depiction of the angel in vv. 1-3. Here the narrative intro is very short, which the speech is much longer than the first one.

**Narrative Introduction, v. 4a.** Καὶ ἤκουσα ἄλλην φωνὴν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ λέγουσαν· Then I heard another voice from heaven saying,

Here the message comes from ἄλλην φωνὴν, another voice. The phraseology distinguishes this from the angel in vv. 1-3. This is the heavenly voice of God speaking as signaled by ὁ λαός μου, My people, in v. 4b,<sup>29</sup> as we have observed several times before in Revelation: 6:6; 10:4, 8; 11:12; 12:10; 14:2, 13; 16:1, 17; 18:4; 19:5; 21:3. The source of that voice is variously identified: ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, out of heaven, 10:4, 8; 11:12: 14:2, 13; 18:4; ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, in heaven, 12:10; ἐν μέσῳ τῶν τεσσάρων ζώων, in the midst of the four living creatures, 6:6; ἐκ τοῦ ναοῦ, out of the temple, 16:1; ἀπὸ τοῦ θρόνου, from the throne, 19:5; 21:3. In 11:12, 12:10, 16:17, 21:3, the voice is identified as a φωναὶ μεγάλοι, loud voice, but in 16:1, μεγάλης φωνῆς, loud voice. In 14:2 the volume of the voice is compared to ὡς φωνὴν ὑδάτων πολλῶν καὶ ὡς φωνὴν βροντῆς μεγάλης, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of loud thunder. Only in 18:4 is the voice identified as ἄλλην φωνὴν, another voice. This is to distinguish this voice from the angel in vv. 1-3.

<sup>29</sup>However, the third person reference to ὁ θεός, God, in v. 5 may signal that the voice is that of Christ, rather than God. But typically, in the auditory experiences with the unnamed voice, it is God who speaks rather than Christ.

The auditory rather than visual nature of the apocalyptic event is underscored by John's standard ἤκουσα, *I heard*. This pattern is used some 33 times inside Revelation, and almost always follows close on εἶδον, *I saw*, which introduces the visual experience of John in apocalyptic vision. This is certainly the case here where John sees the angel who then speaks but only hears the voice of God.

The interesting narration dynamic here is that the perspective of John with the angel is from the vantage point of earth: he sees the angel coming down out of heaven. But his vantage point with hearing the voice of God is less well defined. Hearing it out of heaven probably signals an earth location, although usually the auditory experiences take place in heaven rather than on earth. But as we have repeatedly observed in Revelation John in his apocalyptic trance can instantaneously move from earth to heaven and the reverse.

Whether on earth or in heaven, John heard the voice of God speaking, but it is not speaking to him as the second person plural verb ἐξέλθατε, *come out*, clearly signals. Rather God is speaking to His people on earth as the opening thrust of the speech indicates. The sec-

ondary <sup>G</sup> impact of this kind of framing of the speech is that the thrust of the exhortations given in it come to the readers of Revelation primarily.

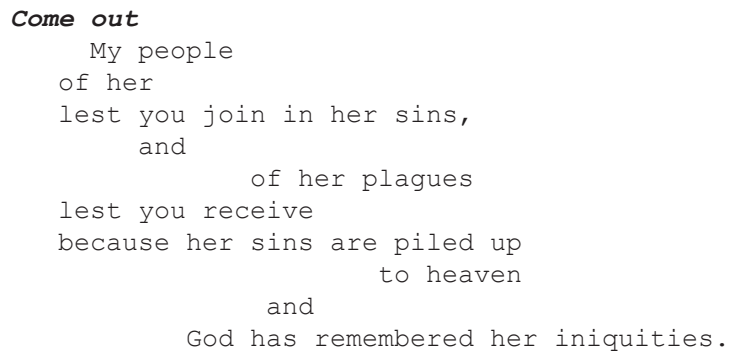
**Speech, vv. 4b-8.** The speech subdivides naturally into two, and possibly three parts. First is a typical OT summons to flee in vv. 4-5.<sup>30</sup> Then a threat of judg-

<sup>30</sup>“Rev 18:4-8, which interrupts the continuity of the ritual lament in vv 1-3 and 9-20, is attributed to an unidentified ‘heavenly voice,’ which mentions the future fall of Babylon. It conforms to a particular prophetic form found in the OT, the summons to flight (Aufforderung zur Flucht), consisting of an initial summons to flee (vv 4-5) followed by a threat of judgment (vv 6-8). Though found in earlier historical narratives (1 Sam 15:6; 22:5), the form is most often found in the writing prophets, particularly Jeremiah (e.g., Jer 4:4-5; 6:1; 48:6-8). Flight from Babylon is specifically enjoined in Jer 50:8-10; 51:6-10; 51:45-48 (a later addition to the Hebrew text); Isa 48:20-22 (using imagery from the flight from Egypt); and Isa 52:11-12. The form is also found in Christian prophecies (Mark 13:14-20; Eusebius Hist. eccl. 3.5.3; Epiphanius Haer. 29.7; 30.2; De mens. et pond. 15 [Migne, PG, 43.261B]; see Matt 2:13, 19-20; Aune, Prophecy, 311-12). The command “Come out of her!” (v 4b) is followed by the reason for the command (v 5), an encouragement to pay back Rome double for what she has done

ment follows in vv. 6-8. The summons to flee comes from God to His people (statement # G). But a shift in narrative perspective takes place in vv. 6-7 (statement #s H-K).<sup>31</sup> Particularly in vv. 6-7 and possibly in v. 8 also (statement #s L-M), The double imperatives of ἀπόδοτε αὐτῇ, *give back to her*, and διπλώσατε τὰ διπλά, *repay double*, continue in the second person plural verb form in the pattern of ἐξέλθατε, *come out*, in v. 4. But these commands in the second plural are directed to agents carrying out God's judgment, rather than just to His people, as in v. 4. But verse eight asserts that God will punish Babylon quickly and decisively.

**God's summons to flee, vv. 4b-5.** 4b ἐξέλθατε ὁ λαός μου ἐξ αὐτῆς ἵνα μὴ συγκοινωνήσητε ταῖς ἀμαρτίαις αὐτῆς, καὶ ἐκ τῶν πληγῶν αὐτῆς ἵνα μὴ λάβητε, 5 ὅτι ἐκολλήθησαν αὐτῆς αἱ ἀμαρτίαι ἄχρι τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ ἐμνημόνευσεν ὁ θεὸς τὰ ἀδικήματα αὐτῆς. 4b *Come out of her, my people, so that you do not take part in her sins, and so that you do not share in her plagues; 5 for her sins are heaped high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.*

The block diagram illustrates the structure of this command from God:



The main clause ἐξέλθατε ὁ λαός μου ἐξ αὐτῆς, *come out*

(v 6). The reason for leaving the city is because of the imminent arrival of plagues: disease, famine, and conflagration (vv 4cd, 8). In the present context these plagues must be those associated with the seven trumpets and seven bowls.” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 977.]

<sup>31</sup>“Sandwiched in between the threats of v 6 and v 8 is a brief monologue attributed to Babylon-Rome in v 7b, intended to dramatize the claim made in v 7a that she has ‘glorified herself and lived sensually’ and should therefore be repaid by torment and grief. In v 7b Babylon-Rome personified says in her heart, ‘I sit as queen ... m not a widow; / sorrow will I never see.’ The hubris of Babylon-Rome is brought home to the reader clearly and forcefully through this brief speech. A similar rhetorical device is the more lengthy monologue attributed to Jerusalem personified as a widow and as a mother bereft of her children in Bar 4:9b-16. The humility and degradation of this speech contrast vividly with the pride of the speech of Babylon-Rome in 18:7b.” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 978.]



of her, *My people*, is followed by two negative purpose clauses introduced by ἵνα μὴ, lest. These have the tone of a warning. Then a reason for the admonition is set forth by the adverbial causal conjunction ὅτι.

**The admonition ἐξέλθατε ὁ λαός μου ἐξ αὐτῆς** demands that God's people separate themselves from evil Babylon / Rome. This has many echoes in OT prophetic preaching to ancient Israel.<sup>32</sup> Jeremiah 51:45 in God's addressing the exiled Israelites living in Babylon is particularly similar to here (not in LXX):

יָצֵא מִתּוֹכָהּ עִמִּי וּמִלְטוֹ אִישׁ אֶת־נַפְשׁוֹ מִחֶרֶן יְהוָה׃  
*Come out of her, my people! Save your lives, each of you, from the fierce anger of the Lord!*

The first admonition עִמִּי מִתּוֹכָהּ יָצֵא is literally translated by John into the Greek admonition ἐξέλθατε ὁ λαός μου ἐξ αὐτῆς.

But what does ἐξέλθατε, *come out*, imply? Jeremiah called upon the exiled Israelites to flee the ancient city of Babylon before her impending downfall. Is this the sense in which John is using the admonition here? Babylon as a code word for Rome would mean that he calls upon his readers to get out of the city of Rome before her downfall. But his targeted readers did not live in the city of Rome. They were already away from the city. The proper meaning of this command is symbolic.<sup>33</sup> To be in the city means participation in her evil and destructive ways. What God calls upon His people

<sup>32</sup>“The call for the people of God to leave Babylon in order not to partake of her sins and plagues alludes to several prophetic passages in the OT prophets, particularly Jer 51:45 (which is not found in the LXX): ‘Go out of the midst of her, my people’ (see also Jer 50:8[LXX 27:8]; 51:6[LXX 28:6]; Isa 48:20; 52:11).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 990.]

<sup>33</sup>“It is generally agreed among commentators that the αὐτῆς, ‘her,’ from which the people of God are to flee, is Babylon, personified as a woman, used as a code name for Rome. If ‘Rome’ is understood as the city of Rome (cf. 17:9, 18; 18:10, 16, 18, 21), the possibility is raised that this ‘summons to flight’ is addressed specifically to the Christian community (or communities) of the city of Rome or the Roman empire. Since it is impossible to flee from the latter, Rissi argues that ‘Babylon’ cannot symbolize Rome (Babylon, 55–56). It appears more likely, however, that the summons to flee from the city is used symbolically, with the city referring to the demonic social and political power structure that constituted the Roman empire, while the summons to flight refers to the necessity of Christians disentangling themselves and distancing themselves morally, and perhaps even socially, from the corrupt and seductive influences of Roman rule in Asia (Souza Nogueira, “Widerstand,” 208–9). A parallel instance of a symbolic use of the prophetic ‘summons to flight’ is found in 2 Cor 6:17, where Paul exhorts the Corinthians ‘to come out from them and be separate’ (an allusion to Isa 52:11–12, which contains a literal prophetic ‘summons to flight’), i.e., to abstain from the idolatrous practices of pagan society (though no impending catastrophe is in view).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 991.]

to do is to not yield to the temptation of her seduction to evil. They must separate themselves out from the evil people in complete rejection of the evil lifestyle of these people. This kind of spiritual and moral separation comes as a much harder challenge.

The two warnings ἵνα μὴ συγκοινωνήσητε ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις αὐτῆς, καὶ ἐκ τῶν πληγῶν αὐτῆς ἵνα μὴ λάβητε, so that you do not take part in her sins, and so that you do not share in her plagues, reflect why God demands a spiritual separate from evil people. First, the temptation to participate in her sins becomes powerful when fulling living in her midst. Second, to yield to this temptation means that one will suffer along with her in the coming plagues upon her. Some very unusual grammar patterns emerge here that are atypical for Revelation. But they have a reason behind them.<sup>34</sup>

Behind these two warnings stands Jer. 51:6b

וּסְוֹ מִתּוֹךְ בְּבַל וּמִלְטוֹ אִישׁ נַפְשׁוֹ  
 אֶל־תִּדְמֻוּ בְּעוֹנָהּ כִּי עַתָּה נִקְמָה הִיא  
 לַיהוָה גְּמוּלָה הִיא מִשְׁלֵם לָהּ׃

*Flee from the midst of Babylon,*

*save your lives, each of you!*

***Do not perish because of her guilt,  
 for this is the time of the Lord's vengeance;  
 he is repaying her what is due.***

The idea of συγκοινωνήσητε ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις αὐτῆς, *not participate in her sins*, needs amplification. The idea of the verb is to enter into a partnership with. The idea is identical to that of Paul in Eph. 5:11 where the other use of the verb in the NT is found: καὶ μὴ συγκοινωνεῖτε τοῖς ἔργοις τοῖς ἀκάργοις τοῦ σκοτους, μᾶλλον δὲ καὶ ἐλέγχετε, *Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them*. The seductive power of Babylon has already been demonstrated repeatedly in Revelation to be hugely powerful. The Christian community

<sup>34</sup>“4c ἵνα μὴ συγκοινωνήσητε ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις αὐτῆς, καὶ ἐκ τῶν πληγῶν αὐτῆς ἵνα μὴ λάβητε, ‘lest you participate in her sins, / and lest you share her suffering.’ The clause καὶ ἐκ τῶν πληγῶν αὐτῆς ἵνα μὴ λάβητε, ‘and lest you share her suffering,’ is very unusual in that the partitive genitive phrase that functions as the object of the verb λάβητε, ‘share,’ is placed before the ἵνα, ‘in order that,’ whereas in all other ἵνα clauses in Revelation (as in Greek usage generally) the subjects, objects, and indirect objects of the verbs governed by the ἵνα clause follow the ἵνα. The only obvious reason for this violation of normal Greek word order is to construct a poetic chiasm consisting of the abb’a’ pattern:

- a ἵνα μὴ συγκοινωνήσητε  
 Lest you participate
- b ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις αὐτῆς  
 in her sins
- b’ καὶ ἐκ τῶν πληγῶν αὐτῆς  
 and in her sufferings
- a’ ἵνα μὴ λάβητε  
 lest you share”

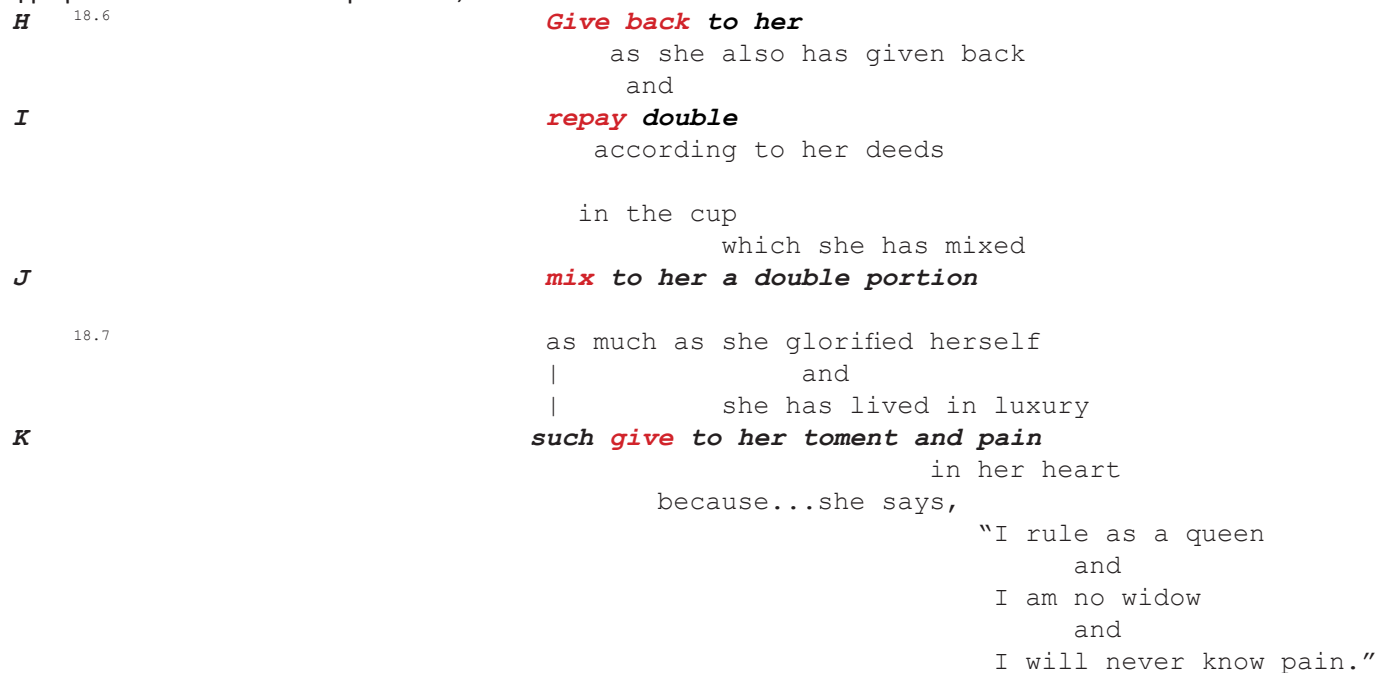
[David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 991.]

dare not succumb to those temptations!

To yield to such temptations will spell much unnecessary suffering by God’s people is the point in the second warning: καὶ ἐκ τῶν πληγῶν αὐτῆς ἵνα μὴ λάβητε, *and lest you receive out of her plagues*. The use of τῶν πληγῶν αὐτῆς, *out of her plagues*, alludes to at least to the seven bowls of wrath mentioned as πληγή in 15:1, 8; 16:9, 21; 21:9. Most likely the other plagues are intended as well: 9:18, 20; 11:6. The idea of πληγή is a “sudden hard stroke with some instrument” that causes a serious if not fatal wound.<sup>35</sup> The imagery in Ezek. 9:4-5 of going through Jerusalem to place a mark on the righteous people so that they will avoid the plagues (LXX term used) that are coming on the city is a helpful background here. In the background then stands τὴν σφραγίδα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐπὶ τῶν μετώπων, *the seal of God on*

עֲזֹבוּהָ וְנִלְךְ אִישׁ לְאֶרְצוֹ כִּי־גָגַע, *Forsake her, and let each of us go to our own country; for her judgment has reached up to heaven and has been lifted up even to the skies.*<sup>37</sup> In vv. 11-23, human agents are summoned to carry out God’s judgment upon ancient Babylon. The image is of extreme sin that demands divine punishment because it gets high in the sky where God can clearly see it. Thus ἐμνημόνευσεν ὁ θεὸς τὰ ἀδικήματα αὐτῆς, *God remembers her iniquities*.

**Commands to begin judgment, vv. 6-7.** Here the narrative shift takes place where God now issues commands to unnamed agents to carry out His judgment upon Babylon. Four core commands form the foundation of this single sentence in vv. 6-7, as is illustrated in the block diagram:



their foreheads (9:4; 7:3; 14:1; 22:4), which marks of the people of God on earth.

**The reason for the admonition** comes in v. 5 with ὅτι ἐκολλήθησαν αὐτῆς αἱ ἁμαρτίαι ἄχρι τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ ἐμνημόνευσεν ὁ θεὸς τὰ ἀδικήματα αὐτῆς, *for her sins are heaped high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities*.

A twofold reason is given in a typical Hebrew step parallel pattern of the second reason being based on the first reason. The image of stacking up the sins of Babylon in an extremely high pile is taken especially from Jer. 51:9,<sup>36</sup> אֶל־הַשָּׁמַיִם מִשְׁפָּה נֹשֵׂא עַד־שָׁמַיִם:

<sup>35</sup>Arndt, William, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000. S.v., πληγή, ἦς, ἦ.

<sup>36</sup>“The validity of the Jer. 51:9 allusion is borne out by the presence of allusions to Jer. 51:7 in 18:3 and to Jer. 51:45 in 18:4.”

The commands come from God and this is clear in the text. But to whom the commands are issues is not [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), 900.]

<sup>37</sup>“Again, appeal is made to Jeremiah 51: ‘for her [Babylon’s] judgment has reached to heaven, it is lifted up to the skies’ (Jer. 51:9; cf. also Gen. 18:20; 19:13). In the OT and later Jewish writings being ‘lifted up’ was an idiom for an extreme degree of corporate sin (Jon. 1:2; Ezra 9:6; 1 Esdras 8:75; 4 Ezra 11:43). God ‘will remember her unrighteous acts’ because they have mounted up before him, and their presence in heaven will remind him to punish these acts. In Jer. 51:9 ‘judgment,’ the effect of sin, is substituted for sin itself in order to emphasize the severe consequence of sin. Babylon has so multiplied her sin that God must multiply his judgments against her in order to maintain his justice.” [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), 900.]

clear. Clearly from the content of all four commands these individuals (note 2 pers plu. imperative verbs) are never identified specifically.<sup>38</sup>

More important, ultimately, is the nature of the judgments specified in the four commands. Notice that two of the four judgments are comparative, while the second and third judgments are a double portion to what she had committed. The general statement of judgment in verse five, ἐμνημόνευσεν ὁ θεὸς τὰ ἀδικήματα αὐτῆς, **God has remembered her iniquities**, now becomes more specific.

The first judgment (statement # H), ἀπόδοτε αὐτῇ ὡς καὶ αὐτὴ ἀπέδωκεν, **render to her as she also has rendered**, echoes Psalm 136:8 (LXX 137:8).

θυγάτηρ Βαβυλῶνος ἡ ταλαίπωρος,  
μακάριος ὃς ἀνταποδώσει σοι τὸ ἀνταπόδομά σου,  
ὃ ἀνταπέδωκας ἡμῖν

O daughter Babylon, you devastator!  
Happy shall they be **who pay you back**  
**what you have done to us!**<sup>39</sup>

The doubling principle in the second and third judgments raises some important issues: καὶ διπλώσατε τὰ διπλᾶ κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτῆς, ἐν τῷ ποτηρίῳ ᾧ ἐκέρασεν κέρασατε αὐτῇ διπλοῦν, **and repay her double for her deeds; mix a double draught for her in the cup she mixed**. If those being commanded by God are understood to be ὁ λαός μου, **My people**, mentioned in v. 4, then it would seem that believers here are being admonished to seek

<sup>38</sup>“The imperative ‘render’ could be directed to God’s human (20:4) or angelic (e.g., 16:17ff.; 18:21) agents of retribution; human executioners are also suggested by the allusion to Jer. 27:29 LXX (see below). In particular, in the light of Rev. 17:16, the ten kings and the beast may be addressed here.<sup>170</sup> Alternatively, it is also possible that the subjects are ‘my people’ (18:4),<sup>171</sup> and this view could receive further support not only from 20:4 but also from Ps. 136:8 LXX (see below) and Rev. 11:3–6, where the prophetic witnesses (i.e., God’s people) inflict punishment preliminary to the final judgment on their persecutors. Ultimately, in the light of Jer. 28:24 LXX (see below), God himself is likely included among those addressed by the plural imperatives, since he is the ultimate dispenser of Babylon’s judgment and of the executors of that judgment (cf. Jer. 27:15 LXX). The address is thus not a command but the imperative of entreaty (as in, e.g., Luke 17:5).” [[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), 900.]

<sup>39</sup>“Similarly, Jer. 27:29 LXX (= 50:29 in MT) says of Babylon: ‘render (ἀνταπόδοτε) to her according to her works; according to all that she has done, do to her.’ Likewise, in Jer. 28:24 LXX (= 51:24 in MT) God says, ‘I will repay (ἀνταποδώσω) Babylon and all its inhabitants ... for all their evil that they have done’ (cf. also Jer. 27:15 [= 50:15]). Here in the Apocalypse the punishment of historical Babylon becomes typological of the punishment of the endtime Babylonian system.” [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), 901.]

revenge upon evil Babylon.<sup>40</sup> This would make this text stand in clear contradiction to the universal principle of the NT from Jesus to the apostles that God’s people are never to seek revenge on others who harm them. The comparative principle of the OT *lex talionis*, *law of payment in kind*,<sup>41</sup> in the comparative statements, ὡς καὶ αὐτὴ ἀπέδωκεν, **as she also has rendered**; κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτῆς, **according to her deeds**; τοσοῦτον δότε αὐτῇ βασανισμόν καὶ πένθος, **give to her a like measure of torment and suffering**, raise questions about the doubling principle seemingly also set forth here alongside the obvious ‘payment in kind’ principle. So what exactly do the verb διπλόω and the nominal adjective διπλοῦς, -ῆ, -οῦν, mean? The verb is only used this one time in the entire NT and the adjective only here, Mt. 23:15 and 1 Tim. 5:17. Could it be that Bible translators have seriously erred in translating these as ‘double’ when they should have been rendered as ‘equivalent’? Interestingly, the LXX uses διπλόω and διπλοῦς quite often to translate several Hebrew words with the meaning of ‘equivalent’ rather than ‘double.’<sup>42</sup> If this LXX meaning

<sup>40</sup>“The righteous do occasionally act as agents of divine retribution in Jewish apocalyptic literature, perhaps in part as a legacy of the holy-war tradition (1 Enoch 90:19; 91:12; 95:3, 7; 96:1; 98:12; Jub. 23:30; Apoc. Abr. 29.17–20). According to the expectation expressed in 1 Enoch 38:5 (tr. Knibb), ‘the mighty kings will at that time be destroyed and given into the hand of the righteous and the holy.’” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 994.]

<sup>41</sup>“The principle of *lex talionis* (i.e., ‘proportional retribution’) from the Latin legal term *talio*, ‘payment in kind’ (cf. A. Dihle, *Die goldene Regel: Eine Einführung in die Geschichte der antiken und frühchristlichen Vulgarethik* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962] 13–40), and exemplified by the OT phrase ‘an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth’ (Exod 21:23–25; cf. Demosthenes 24.140–41; Diodorus 12.17.4), is a frequent motif in the prophetic judgment speeches of OT prophets (Isa 34:8; 59:18; 65:6–7; Ezek 9:10; 11:21; 16:43; 17:19; 22:31; 23:49; Hos 4:9; 12:2; Joel 3:4, 7 [MT 4:4, 7]; Obad 15–16; see Prov 24:12) and early Jewish literature (Sib. Or 3.312–14; Apoc. Abr. 29.19). It is also a motif in eschatological contexts in the NT (Matt 7:1–2 = Luke 6:37; 16:27; 2 Tim 4:14). A similar motif occurs in the farewell testament of Mattathias in 1 Macc 2:68, ‘Pay back the Gentiles in full [ἀνταπόδοτε ἀνταπόδομα τοῖς ἔθνεσιν].’ In Ps 137:8 (LXX 136:8), the principle of *lex talionis* is applied to Babylon: ‘O daughter of Babylon, you devastator! Happy shall he be who requites you what you have done to us [ὃς ἀνταποδώσει σοι τὸ ἀνταπόδομά σου, ὃ ἀνταπέδωκας ἡμῖν].’” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 993.]

<sup>42</sup>“However, the principle of ‘the punishment fitting the crime’ appears to be contradicted by the concluding clauses of v 6, which say that Babylon will be punished ‘double’ for her sin. This apparent contradiction of the principle of equivalent punishment is intensified by the restatement of that principle in v 7. But Kline has demonstrated convincingly that the almost unanimous translation ‘double’ in the English versions is inaccurate. He shows that the Hebrew equivalent of LXX uses of διπλόω/διπλοῦς (*kāpal/kepel*)

is adopted here, then the second and third judgments advocate the same principle as the first and fourth.<sup>43</sup> The idea of equivalent also is consistent with the same idea inherent in ἀποδίδωμι and κεράννυμι in the first and third judgments. Plus the image of filling up Babylon's cup of punishments which she has inflicted to the same equivalent level of punishment to be inflicted on her makes the image work better, rather than packing twice as much punishments on her in this same cup.

Another perspective emerges if those being commanded to inflict God's punishments on Babylon are understood as the ten kings described in 16:16-18 who are to destroy Babylon in that apocalyptic scene.<sup>44</sup> Perin their respective contexts throughout the OT means 'produce a duplicate' (or 'repeat'; likewise the noun he finds to mean 'duplicate, twin, matching equivalent'). Though 'double' is possible in some OT uses, it is not demanded. Kline especially establishes the meaning 'duplicate/equivalent' in texts to which Rev. 18:6 may allude (Isa. 40:2; Jer. 16:18) and in the two uses of the adjective elsewhere in the NT (Matt. 23:15; 1 Tim. 5:17). Consequently, the clauses in Rev. 18:6 should be translated 'give the very equivalent (διπλώσατε τὰ διπλᾶ) according to her work; in the cup in which she mixed, mix for her the equivalent' (for a similar metaphor see on 14:10).<sup>172</sup>

"This rendering removes the contradiction of the immediately preceding and following statements regarding commensurate punishment and is more consistent with the formula 'according to her works,' which suggests a degree of punishment matching the degree of sin. It also alleviates the metaphorical difficulty of putting twice as much into Babylon's cup, which has already been described as 'full' (17:4). Rather, 'Babylon's iniquities were to be balanced by their equal weight of punishment in God's scales of justice.' 173"

[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), 901.]

<sup>43</sup>For detailed defense of this view see Kline, M. G., "Double Trouble," *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society* 32 (1989) 171-79.

<sup>44</sup>"The idea of paying people back double for the evil they have done occurs with some frequency in Greek literature, though it is never claimed that this is just (Hesiod Works 709-11; Iliad 13.445-47; Theognis 1189-90; Sophocles Oedipus Rex 1320; Aeschylus Agamemnon 537; Plato Laws 642e; Xenophon Anabasis 1.9.11; Memorabilia 2.6.35; cf. Blundell, *Enemies*, 30; Dover, *Morality*, 184, calls this 'a head for an eye'). This is perhaps the reversal of the principle of generosity whereby someone is paid back double for what has been borrowed or taken from them (T. Job 4.7-8; cf. Luke 19:8, where Zacchaeus promises to pay back anyone he has defrauded fourfold the original amount). The notion of a sevenfold return of evil is found in Ps 79:12. In Greek literature the harming of one's enemy to the fullest extent allowed by the law is a commonplace (Solon Frag. 1 [ed. E. Diehl, *Anthologia Lyrica Graeca*, 3rd ed. (Leipzig: Teubner, 1954)]; Euripides *Medea* 807-10; Ion 1046-47; Plato *Meno* 71E; Isocrates *Ad Dem.* 26; Pindar *Pyth.* 2.83-85; Blundell, *Enemies*, 26-31), and the notion of τὸ ἀντιπεπονθός, 'to suffer in return,' i.e., *lex talionis*, is found among the Pythagoreans (Aristotle *Nic. Ethics* 1132b) and among other Greeks (Aeschylus *Choephoroi* 309-14; Thucydides 3.40.7;

haps these pagan agents of punishments would be included to dish out as much as possible. Yet in the framing of these punishments the standard of God's character rather than that of these pagans is the principle of judgment. A third proposal that the agents of God's judgments in the commands in vv. 6-7 are the 'angels of punishments' in the three series of sevens. Although popular in some circles the view has little, if anything, to commend it.<sup>45</sup>

Whoever may be charged with carrying out these divine judgments, the text is clear that they will come and that they will be appropriate to the level of evil that characterizes Babylon.

**Declaration of impending judgment, v. 8.** διὰ τοῦτο ἐν μιᾷ ἡμέρᾳ ἤξουσιν αἱ πληγαὶ αὐτῆς, θάνατος καὶ πένθος καὶ λιμός, καὶ ἐν πυρὶ κατακαυθήσεται, ὅτι ἰσχυρὸς κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ κρίνας αὐτήν. **therefore her plagues will come in a single day — pestilence and mourning and famine — and she will be burned with fire; for mighty is the Lord God who judges her.**

Clearly the voice comes to a climax in this final verse with the assertion of impending judgment upon Babylon. The structuring of this declaration is somewhat different than in the two previous subunits of vv. 4b-5 and 6-7. The block diagram below illustrates this visually. Here punishments are labeled αἱ πληγαὶ αὐτῆς, **her plagues**. These are then defined in three categories: θάνατος καὶ πένθος καὶ λιμός, **death and suffering and famine**. But added to these plagues is ἐν πυρὶ κατακαυθήσεται, **with fire she will be burned down**. The reason given here is different than in v. 7. The four punishments are to fall on Babylon there ὅτι ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ αὐτῆς λέγει ὅτι κάθημαι βασίλισσα καὶ χήρα οὐκ εἰμι καὶ πένθος οὐ μὴ ἴδω, because in her heart she says, "I rule as a queen and am no widow and I will never suffer." Her arrogance and self-sufficiency become what brings down God's judgments. But here the reason is ὅτι ἰσχυρὸς κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ κρίνας αὐτήν, **because mighty is the Lord God who judges her**. The superior power of God to bring Aristotle *Top.* 113a; *Rhet.* 1367a)." [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, vol. 52C, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 992-993.]

<sup>45</sup> "The most popular proposal is that the subject of the imperatives is the 'angels of punishment' (Strafengel), variously specified as 'spirits of vengeance' (Beckwith, 714), 'ministers of Divine Justice' (Swete, 229), or 'angelic agents of retribution' (Caird, 224). Angels of punishment who act as agents of divine judgment are familiar figures in early Jewish literature (1 Enoch 53:3; 56:1; 62:11; 63:1; 66:1; 3 Enoch 31:2; 32:1; 33:1; b. Šabb. 55a; 88a; cf. P. S. Alexander, *OTP* 1:285 n. 31f; K. E. Grözinger, "Engel III," *TRE* 9:591; Michl, "Engel II," *RAC* 5:75-76). The weakness of this view lies in the abrupt shift from the 'people' as collective subjects of the plural verbs in v 4 to another group that is never explicitly mentioned in the text." [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, vol. 52C, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 994.]

because of this  
in one hour

**L**

**her plagues will come**

death

and

mourning

and

famine

and

with fire

**M**

**she will be burned**

because mighty is the Lord God

Who judges her.

down judgments upon her is the basis of these pronouncements of judgment.

Note first the initial pronouncement of impending doom upon Babylon: διὰ τοῦτο ἐν μιᾷ ἡμέρᾳ ἔξουσιν αἱ πληγαὶ αὐτῆς, θάνατος καὶ πένθος καὶ λιμός, **because of this in one hour her plagues will arrive: death and suffering and famine.** Note the background imagery in reference to ancient Babylon in Isa. 47:9 here: νῦν δὲ ἔξει ἐξαίφνης ἐπὶ σὲ τὰ δύο ταῦτα ἐν μιᾷ ἡμέρᾳ· χηρεία καὶ ἀτεκνία ἔξει ἐξαίφνης ἐπὶ σὲ ἐν τῇ φαρμακείᾳ σου ἐν τῇ ἰσχύι τῶν ἐπασιδῶν σου σφόδρα† **both these things shall come upon you in a moment, in one day: the loss of children and widowhood shall come upon you in full measure, in spite of your many sorceries and the great power of your enchantments.**<sup>46</sup> John chose random items from the prophetic pronouncements of doom upon ancient Babylon in order to depict his apocalyptic pronouncement of doom upon Rome as a symbol of the end time ruling power in the world. The depiction given here with the three topics typical of the siege of a city in ancient warfare both reflect the OT prophetic destruction of

<sup>46</sup>“The allusion to Isa 47 continues, this time from Isa 47:9, referring to Babylon (NRSV): ‘both of these things [widowhood, loss of children] shall come upon you in a moment, in one day [LXX 47:8: ἐν μιᾷ ἡμέρᾳ].’ The specific plagues mentioned, pestilence, mourning, famine, and burning with fire, though not found in Isa 47, are all part of the ancient topos used in describing the capture of a city (Dio Chrysostom Or. 11.29–30). Pestilence and famine were the common results of a prolonged siege (e.g., the siege of Agrigentum by Rome [Polybius 1.19.7]), mourning is linked with the death of the inhabitants, and burning with fire is the final act of destruction by the conquerors. λιμός, ‘hunger, famine,’ can mean anything from hunger to death by starvation, either for a few or for many (Garnsey, *Famine*, 19). λιμός is used here of ‘life-threatening hunger,’ and it is used by ancient historians to describe various catastrophic food crises in cities (Agrigentum: Polybius 1.19.7; Rome: Cassius Dio 55.27.1–3; 55.31.3–4; Appian Bell. civ. 5.67). The destruction of Rome by fire is predicted in Sib. Or 2.15–19; 3.52–62; 5.158–61. The burning of Babylon-Rome was referred to in 17:16, and it is mentioned again in 18:8, 18. The burning of a besieged city following its capture was a typical act of retribution in the ancient world (Jer 34:22).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 996.]

Babylon in their day as a symbol of a similar destruction at the end of time. By labeling them as αἱ πληγαὶ, **plagues**, he reinforces the idea of military seige of the city. Remember that in Greek these are not rampant outbreaks of disease. Instead, they are disabling blows struck against the city that bring it down to destruction. This twofold destruction was alluded to in 17:16 with ἡρρημωμένην ποιήσουσιν αὐτήν καὶ γυμνήν καὶ τὰς σάρκας αὐτῆς φάγονται καὶ αὐτήν κατακαύσουσιν ἐν πυρὶ, **and they will make her desolate and naked, and will devour her flesh and will burn her down with fire.** The second aspect is to burn the city down with fire, as mentioned in 17:16 and 18:18 as well. Typically in John’s world the subsequent burning to the ground of a captured city was an act of retribution from those who captured it.

Quite interestingly the adverbial qualifier ἐν μιᾷ ἡμέρᾳ, **in one hour**, denotes an impending arrival of all of this destruction. This is then repeated in lamentation of the sailors in 18:19, ὅτι μιᾷ ὥρᾳ ἡρρημώθη, **because in one hour she has been laid waste.** This second use has a slightly different angle of emphasis, but underscores the meaning of such a phrase as in a very short period of time. This compares to ἐν μιᾷ ἡμέρᾳ, **in one day**, in Isa. 47:8 (LXX).

The reason for such destruction in judgment is then given as ὅτι ἰσχυρὸς κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ κρίνας αὐτήν, **because mighty is the Lord God who judges her.** The evil of Babylon has been repeatedly stressed as a major reason for her doom. But at the end of the speech from the heavenly voice, the superior power of God is given as the basis for this impending doom of Babylon.<sup>47</sup> The

<sup>47</sup>“The term ἰσχυρὸς, ‘mighty,’ is used as an explicit attribute of God only here in the NT (cf. 1 Cor 1:25; 10:22; Eph 1:18). Here the emphasis on the might or power of God is appropriate in light of the anticipated scale and suddenness of the destruction of Babylon-Rome. It seems clear that this clause should be taken with v 8a, rather than as a concluding comment that applies to vv 4–8 as a whole. The statement answers a question implied by v 8a: How is such a sudden and complete overthrow of Babylon-Rome possible? Answer: It is possible by the might and power of God. Eros and Ananke are called ἰσχυροτάτω, ‘most mighty,’ in Aelius Aristides Or. 43.16 (van der Horst, *Aristides*, 84).” [David E. Aune, Page 900]

destruction of a city with the power of ancient Rome would require a deity of great power and authority -- something only the God of the believers possessed. When one looks ahead to the actual destruction of Babylon at the end of time in both 19:15b and 20:9b, the display of that awesome destructive power is clear:

19:15b. καὶ ἐκ τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ ἐκπορεύεται ῥομφαία ὀξεῖα, ἵνα ἐν αὐτῇ πατάξῃ τὰ ἔθνη, καὶ αὐτὸς ποιμανεῖ αὐτοὺς ἐν ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾶ, καὶ αὐτὸς πατεῖ τὴν ληνὸν τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς ὀργῆς τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ παντοκράτορος, *From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron; he will tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.*

20:9b. καὶ κατέβη πῦρ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ κατέφαγεν αὐτούς. *And fire came down from heaven and consumed them.*

Such overwhelming display of divine power should catch our attention strongly. All of those participating in evil with Babylon will be swept away by this power in a moment. Military might, political authority, shining personality, fabulous wealth, individual genius -- all of these will be utterly worthless and void of any power in that final moment. No one escapes this divine power of destruction. The only escape will be those living in holiness as a reflection of faith commitment to Christ.

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

This continuing picture of Babylon begun at the end of chapter sixteen continues to remind us of the dangers of playing around with evil. And evil comes in many forms. Here in 18:1-8, and even more so in 9-20, it comes as an economic bundle. Babylon stands even to God's people (vv. 4-5) as a temptation to make the accumulation of wealth the passion of our life. But to yield to Babylon's seduction for wealth and money is to doom oneself with her under divine judgment.

That Babylon is doomed is as certain as the rising of the morning sun. She seduces many with the self-delusion, *κάθημαι βασίλισσα καὶ χήρα οὐκ εἰμι καὶ πένθος οὐ μὴ ἴδω*, "I rule as a queen and am no widow and will never suffer." Oh so many people buy into that self delusion and follow after her in a quest for wealth and luxury. To be sure, she and those with her do live now in luxury: *ἐδόξασεν αὐτήν καὶ ἐστρηνίασεν*, *she glorified herself and lived in luxury*. But coming ahead are 'plagues' as severe as the extent of her luxury. Out of these come *βασανισμὸν καὶ πένθος*, *torment and suffering*. They will hit her and her followers suddenly in utter devastation.

The next time you drive by one of these excessively luxurious homes here in the central valley and think to yourself, "It would be nice to live in one of these," just remind yourself of Rev. 18:1-8. Once you see those

homes from God's angle, they are far more deadly than the worst slum home anywhere in the valley. They will bring about the doom of those living in them. And the suffering and pain of that destruction will be far worse than any fire that ravages some of the slum homes here on occasion.