

Revelation 18:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing,

Analysis

The merchants standing afar off for fear of her torment reveals self-preservation overcoming commercial loyalty. Their weeping and wailing demonstrates grief over financial loss, not moral conviction. The distance they maintain shows fear of sharing her judgment. Reformed theology recognizes that worldly relationships ultimately prove shallow—based on mutual benefit, not covenant love. The merchants' response contrasts heaven's rejoicing (v. 20), revealing different value systems. Their tears are for lost profits, not lost souls or justice served.

Historical Context

Rome's merchant class enriched themselves through trade networks. The vision depicts their horror at sudden economic collapse destroying their wealth. Their distant stance reflects both physical danger (city burning) and moral separation—unwilling to risk association with fallen Babylon. This fulfills prophetic patterns where allies abandon doomed cities (Ezekiel 27:29-36 on Tyre).

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How do the merchants' selfish grief and fearful distance challenge you to evaluate whether your relationships are based on mutual benefit or genuine covenant love?
2. What does their weeping over financial loss rather than moral issues reveal about misplaced priorities?

Interlinear Text

τοῦ	ἔμποροι	τούτων	τοῦ	πλουτήσαντες	ἀπὸ	αὐτῆς
which	The merchants	of these things	which	were made rich	by	her
G3588	G1713	G5130	G3588	G4147	G575	G846
ἀπὸ	μακρόθεν	στήσουνται	διὰ	τοῦ	φόβον	τοῦ
by	afar	shall stand	for	which	the fear	which
G3588	G3113	G2476	G1223	G3588	G5401	G3588
βασανισμοῦ	αὐτῆς	κλαίοντες	καὶ	πενθοῦντες		
torment	her	weeping	and	wailing		
G929	G846	G2799	G2532	G3996		

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 18:3 (Parallel theme): For all 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 are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.

Ezekiel 27:31 (Parallel theme): And they shall make themselves utterly bald for thee, and gird them with sackcloth, and they shall weep for thee with bitterness of heart and bitter wailing.

