

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 πλουτίσαντες ἀπὸ αὐτῆς
which The merchants of these things which were made rich by her
G3588 G1713 G5130 G3588 G4147 G575 G846

ἀπὸ μακρόθεν στήσονται διὰ τοῦ φόβον τοῦ
by afar shall stand for which the fear which
G575 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.

