

# Revelation 18:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And saying, Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls!

## Analysis

The repeated catalog of luxury goods (fine linen, purple, scarlet, gold, precious stones, pearls) emphasizes the splendor now lost. The exclamation 'Alas, alas' (Greek 'ouai') pronounces woe over sudden reversal. The city's adorning represents self-glorification through material display. Reformed theology warns against finding identity in possessions or status symbols. The destruction of external adornment reveals internal emptiness. The mourners focus on what she wore rather than who she was, showing materialism's shallowness.

## Historical Context

Roman elites displayed wealth through elaborate clothing and jewelry. Purple dye was extremely expensive, indicating high status. The description reflects historical reality and prophetic tradition condemning prideful display (Isaiah 3:18-24). The sudden loss of these status symbols would humiliate the proud, reducing them to equality with those they despised.

## Related Passages

**Psalm 19:1** — Heavens declare God's glory

**Genesis 1:1** — Creation of heavens and earth

## Study Questions

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1. How much of your identity or self-worth is tied to external adornment or status symbols that could be suddenly lost?
2. What does the focus on what Babylon wore rather than what she was reveal about superficial versus substantive values?

## Interlinear Text

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καὶ λέγοντες, οὐαί, οὐαί, ἡ πόλις ἡ μεγάλη, ἡ  
And saying Alas Alas G3588 city G3588 that great G3588  
G2532 G3004 G3759 G3759 G4172 G3173

περιβεβλημένη βύσσινον καὶ πορφυροῦν καὶ κόκκινον,  
that was clothed in fine linen And purple And scarlet  
G4016 G1039 G2532 G4210 G2532 G2847

καὶ κεχρυσωμένη ἐν χρυσῷ καὶ λίθῳ τιμίῳ καὶ  
And decked with gold And stones precious And  
G2532 G5558 G1722 G5557 G2532 G3037 G5093 G2532

μαργαρίταις.  
pearls  
G3135

## Additional Cross-References

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**Revelation 17:4** (Parallel theme): And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication:

**Revelation 18:19** (Parallel theme): And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate.

