

Revelation 18:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off,

Analysis

The phrase 'in one hour' (repeated three times: vv. 10, 17, 19) emphasizes judgment's sudden swiftness despite long prosperity. Shipmasters, sailors, and all who trade by sea represent those depending on maritime commerce. Their standing afar off and crying demonstrates shock at rapid reversal. The 'great riches' becoming desolate warns against trusting uncertain wealth. Reformed theology emphasizes God's sovereignty over economic systems—what seems stable can collapse instantly at divine decree. The witnesses' distant position shows their inability to help or reverse judgment.

Historical Context

Mediterranean trade enriched coastal cities through maritime commerce. Rome's navy secured sea routes, enabling vast trade networks. The vision depicts complete collapse of this system. Ancient sea trade involved significant risk; shipwreck meant total loss. This imagery communicated that seemingly secure economic foundations could vanish instantly, devastating those dependent on them.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does the 'one hour' timing challenge your assumptions about the stability of economic systems or personal wealth?
2. What practical steps can you take to ensure you're investing in eternal riches rather than trusting in uncertain earthly wealth?

Interlinear Text

ὅτι μιᾶ ὥρα ἡρημώθη ὁ τοσοῦτος πλοῦτος καὶ
For G1520 hour is come to nought G3588 so great riches And
G3754 G5610 G2049 G5118 G4149 G2532

πᾶς κυβερνήτης καὶ πᾶς ἐπὶ τῶν πλοίων ὁ ὅμιλος,
all shipmaster And all in ships the company
G3956 G2942 G2532 G3956 G1909 G4143 G3658

καὶ ναῦται καὶ ὄσοι τὴν θάλασσαν ἐργάζονται ἀπὸ
And sailors And as many as by sea trade off
G2532 G3492 G2532 G3745 G2281 G2038 G575

μακρόθεν ἔστησαν
afar stood
G3113 G2476

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 17:16 (Parallel theme): And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.

Isaiah 23:14 (Parallel theme): Howl, ye ships of Tarshish: for your strength is laid waste.

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.

Jeremiah 51:8 (Parallel theme): Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed: howl for her; take balm for her pain, if so be she may be healed.

Jonah 1:6 (Parallel theme): So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not.

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