

Revelation 18:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.

Analysis

And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.... This verse from Revelation's vision of fall of babylon - economic, political, religious system destroyed, god's people called out employs apocalyptic imagery rich with Old Testament allusions and symbolic meaning. The Greek text uses vivid apocalyptic language characteristic of Jewish prophetic literature, drawing heavily from Daniel, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Zechariah.

The symbolism must be interpreted within its first-century context while recognizing timeless spiritual realities. The imagery would resonate powerfully with persecuted believers facing Roman imperial cult worship, providing hope that despite present suffering, Christ reigns sovereign and will consummate His kingdom. The apocalyptic genre uses symbolic numbers (seven, twelve, 144,000), colors, beasts, and cosmic imagery to convey theological truth rather than photographic descriptions.

Christologically, Revelation consistently exalts Jesus as the victorious Lamb, the faithful witness, the King of kings and Lord of lords. Every vision ultimately points to Christ's supremacy, His finished redemptive work, and His certain return to judge the living and dead and establish the new creation.

Historical Context

John received this revelation circa AD 95 during Domitian's persecution, exiled on Patmos for his testimony. The seven churches of Asia Minor faced increasing pressure to participate in emperor worship and pagan religious practices. Refusal meant economic hardship, social ostracism, and potential martyrdom. Understanding this context illuminates Revelation's encouragement to faithful endurance.

The apocalyptic genre was familiar to first-century Jewish and Christian readers. Rather than newspaper-style predictions, apocalyptic literature uses symbolic imagery to reveal spiritual realities behind earthly events, encourage the faithful, warn the unfaithful, and assert God's ultimate sovereignty over history. Parallels with Daniel, Ezekiel, and intertestamental apocalyptic writings would help original readers decode the symbols.

Rome's imperial cult demanded worship of Caesar as divine, placing Christians in impossible situations—compromise their faith or face persecution. Revelation identifies Rome as "Babylon" and assures believers that despite appearances, the Lamb conquered through His death and resurrection, and all earthly kingdoms will submit to His reign.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does Revelation 18:21 reveal God's character, particularly His sovereignty, holiness, and justice?
2. What specific encouragement or warning does this verse offer for maintaining faithful Christian witness amid cultural pressure?

3. How does this passage point to Christ's victory and the hope of new creation, and how should that shape your present priorities?

Interlinear Text

καὶ ἦρεν εἷς ἄγγελος ἰσχυρὸς λίθον ὡς μύλον
And took up a angel mighty a stone like millstone
G2532 G142 G1520 G32 G2478 G3037 G5613 G3458

μεγάλη καὶ βληθήσεται εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν λέγων,
a great And be thrown down it into the sea saying
G3173 G2532 G906 G1519 G3588 G2281 G3004

Οὕτως ὀρμήματι βληθήσεται Βαβυλὼν ἡ μεγάλη πόλις
Thus with violence be thrown down Babylon a great city
G3779 G3731 G906 G897 G3588 G3173 G4172

καὶ οὐ μὴ εὑρεθῇ ἔτι
And shall be found at all
G2532 G3756 G3361 G2147 G2089

Additional Cross-References

Ezekiel 26:21 (Parallel theme): I will make thee a terror, and thou shalt be no more: though thou be sought for, yet shalt thou never be found again, saith the Lord GOD.

Revelation 5:2 (Parallel theme): And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?

Revelation 16:20 (Parallel theme): And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.

Revelation 18:22 (Parallel theme): And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee;

Revelation 20:11 (Parallel theme): And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

Revelation 12:8 (Parallel theme): And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.

Job 20:8 (Parallel theme): He shall fly away as a dream, and shall not be found: yea, he shall be chased away as a vision of the night.

Daniel 11:19 (Parallel theme): Then he shall turn his face toward the fort of his own land: but he shall stumble and fall, and not be found.

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