

Revelation 21:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

Analysis

But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone...

This verse from Revelation's vision of new heaven, new earth, new Jerusalem - eternal state, god dwelling with his people 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

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does Revelation 21:8 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

δειλοῖς δὲ καὶ ἀπίστοις καὶ ἐβδελυγμένοις καὶ
the fearful **But** **and** **unbelieving** **and** **the abominable** **and**
 G1169 G1161 G2532 G571 G2532 G948 G2532

φονεῦσιν καὶ πόρνοις καὶ φαρμακεῦσιν καὶ
murderers **and** **whoremongers** **and** **sorcerers** **and**
 G5406 G2532 G4205 G2532 G5332 G2532

εἰδωλολάτραις καὶ πᾶσιν τῇ ψευδέσιν τῇ μέρος
idolaters **and** **all** **which** **liars** **which** **part**
 G1496 G2532 G3956 G3588 G5571 G3588 G3313

αὐτῶν ἐν τῇ λίμνῃ τῇ καιομένῃ πυρὶ καὶ
shall have their **in** **which** **the lake** **which** **burneth** **with fire** **and**
 G846 G1722 G3588 G3041 G3588 G2545 G4442 G2532

θείω ὁ ἐστιν δεύτερος θάνατος
brimstone **which** **is** **the second** **death**
 G2303 G3739 G2076 G1208 G2288

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 2:11 (Parallel theme): He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

Revelation 22:15 (Parallel theme): For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.

Proverbs 19:9 (Parallel theme): A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall perish.

1 John 3:15 (Parallel theme): Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

Matthew 8:26 (Faith): And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.

1 Timothy 4:2 (Parallel theme): Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;

Malachi 3:5 (Parallel theme): And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the LORD of hosts.

Revelation 19:20 (Parallel theme): And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.

Hebrews 13:4 (Parallel theme): Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.

Matthew 10:28 (Parallel theme): And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.