

Revelation 22:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:

Analysis

For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:... This verse from Revelation's vision of river of life, invitation, warnings - eternal blessing, urgent call, maranatha 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

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does Revelation 22:18 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

Συμμαρτυροῦμαι	γὰρ	παντὶ	ἀκούοντι	τοὺς	λόγους		
I testify	For	unto every man	that heareth	G3588	the words		
G4828	G1063	G3956	G191		G3056		
τῆς	προφητείας	τοῦ	βιβλίου	τούτου,	ἐάν	τις	ἐπιθήσει
G3588	of the prophecy	G3588	book	of this	If	any man	shall add
	G4394		G975	G5127	G1437	G5100	G2007
πρὸς	ταῦτα,	ἐπιθήσει	ὁ	θεὸς	ἐπ'	αὐτὸν	τὰς
unto	these things	shall add	G3588	God	unto	him	G3588
G4314	G5023	G2007		G2316	G1909	G846	
πληγὰς	τὰς	γεγραμμένας	ἐν	βιβλίῳ	τούτῳ		
the plagues	G3588	that are written	in	book	this		
G4127		G1125	G1722	G975	G5129		

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 12:32 (Parallel theme): What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.

Deuteronomy 4:2 (Word): Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.

Proverbs 30:6 (Word): Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.

Revelation 1:3 (Word): Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.

Revelation 22:7 (Prophecy): Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.

Leviticus 26:18 (Parallel theme): And if ye will not yet for all this hearken unto me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins.

Leviticus 26:28 (Parallel theme): Then I will walk contrary unto you also in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins.

Revelation 15:1 (References God): And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God.

Matthew 15:13 (Parallel theme): But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.

1 Thessalonians 4:6 (Parallel theme): That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified.