

Revelation 1:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.

Analysis

And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.... This verse from Revelation's vision of vision of the glorified christ - his majesty, authority, and presence among the churches 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

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does Revelation 1:16 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	ἔχων	ἐν	τῇ	δεξιᾷ	αὐτοῦ	χειρὶ	ἀστέρας	ἐπτά	καὶ
And	he had	in	G3588	right	his	hand	stars	seven	And
G2532	G2192	G1722		G1188	G846	G5495	G792	G2033	G2532

ἐκ	τοῦ	στόματος	αὐτοῦ	ρομφαία	δίστομος	όξεῖα	
out of	G3588	mouth		his	sword	twoedged	a sharp
G1537		G4750		G846	G4501	G1366	G3691

ἐκπορευομένη	καὶ	ἡ	ὄψις	αὐτοῦ	ὡς	ὁ	ἥλιος
went	And	G3588	countenance	his	was as	G3588	the sun
G1607	G2532		G3799	G846	G5613		G2246

φαίνει	ἐν	τῇ	δυνάμει	αὐτοῦ
shineth	in	G3588	strength	his
G5316	G1722		G1411	G846

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 4:12 (Word): For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Revelation 2:16 (Word): Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

Revelation 2:12 (Word): And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;

Revelation 19:15 (Word): And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

Isaiah 49:2 (Word): And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me;

Ephesians 6:17 (Word): And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

Revelation 19:21 (Word): And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.

Matthew 17:2 (Parallel theme): And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.

Revelation 3:1 (Parallel theme): And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.

Acts 26:13 (Parallel theme): At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me.