

Revelation 1:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:

Analysis

And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:... 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

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How does Revelation 1:17 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	ὅτε	εἶδον	αὐτοῦ	ἐπεσα	πρὸς	τοὺς	πόδας	αὐτοῦ
And	when	I saw	him	I fell	at		feet	him
G2532	G3753	G1492	G846	G4098	G4314		G4228	G846

ώς	νεκρός	καὶ	ἐπέθηκεν	τὴν	δεξιὰν	αὐτοῦ	χεῖρα	ἐπ'
as	dead	And	he laid	G3588	right		him	hand
G5613	G3498	G2532	G2007		G1188		G846	G5495

ἐμὲ	λέγων,	μοι,	Μὴ	φοβοῦ·	ἐγώ	είμι	ό	πρῶτος	καὶ
me	saying	unto me	not	Fear	I	am	G3588	the first	And
G1691	G3004	G3427	G3361	G5399	G1473	G1510		G4413	G2532

ό	ἔσχατος								
G3588	the last								
	G2078								

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 44:6 (Parallel theme): Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God.

Revelation 22:13 (Parallel theme): I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

Isaiah 41:4 (Parallel theme): Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I the LORD, the first, and with the last; I am he.

Isaiah 48:12 (Parallel theme): Hearken unto me, O Jacob and Israel, my called; I am he; I am the first, I also am the last.

Revelation 2:8 (Parallel theme): And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;

Ezekiel 1:28 (Parallel theme): As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake.

Revelation 1:8 (Parallel theme): I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

Isaiah 41:10 (Parallel theme): Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

Daniel 10:15 (Parallel theme): And when he had spoken such words unto me, I set my face toward the ground, and I became dumb.

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org