

Revelation 1:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,

Analysis

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This verse from Revelation's 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

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does Revelation 1:5 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	ἀπὸ	Ἰησοῦ	Χριστοῦ	ό	μάρτυς	ό	πιστός
And	from	Jesus	Christ	G3588	witness	G3588	who is the faithful
G2532	G575	G2424	G5547		G3144		G4103
ό	πρωτότοκος	ἐκ	τῶν	νεκρῶν	καὶ	ό	ἄρχων
G3588	and the first begotten	of	G3588	the dead	And	G3588	the prince
	G4416	G1537		G3498	G2532		G758
τῶν	βασιλέων	τῆς	γῆς	Τῷ	ἀγαπήσαντι	ήμᾶς	καὶ
G3588	of the kings	G3588	of the earth	G3588	Unto him that loved	us	And
	G935		G1093		G25	G2248	G2532
λούσαντι	ήμᾶς	ἀπὸ	τῶν	ἀμαρτιῶν	ήμῶν	ἐν	τῷ
washed	us	from	G3588	sins	our	in	G3588
G3068	G2248	G575		G266	G2257	G1722	G129
αὐτοῦ							
	G846						

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 89:27 (Kingdom): Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth.

Hebrews 9:14 (Blood): How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

Revelation 17:14 (Faith): These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.

1 John 1:7 (Sin): But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

Colossians 1:18 (Parallel theme): And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

1 Peter 1:19 (Blood): But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

Acts 26:23 (References Christ): That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.

Revelation 19:16 (Kingdom): And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

1 John 4:10 (Love): Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Revelation 3:14 (Faith): And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;