

Revelation 16:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared.

Analysis

And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared.... This verse from Revelation's vision of seven bowls of wrath - final judgments, battle of armageddon, babylon's fall announced 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

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does Revelation 16:12 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	ό	ἔκτος	ἄγγελος	ἐξέχεεν	τὴν	φιάλην	αὐτοῦ	ἐπὶ
And		the sixth	angel	poured out		vial	thereof	upon
G2532		G1623	G32	G1632		G5357	G846	G1909

τὸν	ποταμὸν	τὸν	μέγαν	τὸν	Εὐφράτην	καὶ	ἐξηράνθη
G3588	river	G3588	the great	G3588	Euphrates	And	was dried up
	G4215		G3173		G2166	G2532	G3583

τὸ	ὕδωρ	αὐτοῦ	ἵνα	έτοιμασθῇ	ἡ	όδὸς	τῶν
G3588	the water	G846	that	might be prepared	G3588	the way	G3588
	G5204		G2443	G2090		G3598	

βασιλέων	τῶν	ἀπὸ	ἀνατολῶν	ἡλίου			
of the kings	G3588	of	the east	G2246			
G935		G575	G395				

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 9:14 (Parallel theme): Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates.

Jeremiah 51:36 (Parallel theme): Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will plead thy cause, and take vengeance for thee; and I will dry up her sea, and make her springs dry.

Isaiah 44:27 (Parallel theme): That saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers:

Isaiah 41:25 (Parallel theme): I have raised up one from the north, and he shall come: from the rising of the sun shall he call upon my name: and he shall come upon princes as upon morter, and as the potter treadeth clay.

Isaiah 42:15 (Parallel theme): I will make waste mountains and hills, and dry up all their herbs; and I will make the rivers islands, and I will dry up the pools.

Isaiah 11:15 (Parallel theme): And the LORD shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams, and make men go over dryshod.

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org