

# Revelation 16:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image.

## Analysis

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**And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image....** 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

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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

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**Revelation 20:12** — Judgment according to deeds

**Romans 2:1** — Judging others

## Study Questions

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1. How does Revelation 16:2 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

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καὶ	ἀπῆλθεν	τῇ	πρῶτος	καὶ	ἐξέχεεν	τῇ	φιάλην	
And	went	which	the first	And	poured out	which	vial	
G2532	G565	G3588	G4413	G2532	G1632	G3588	G5357	
αὐτοῦ	ἐπὶ	τῇ	γῇ	καὶ	ἐγένετο	ἔλκος	κακὸν	καὶ
his	upon	which	the earth	And	there fell	sore	a noisome	And
G846	G1909	G3588	G1093	G2532	G1096	G1668	G2556	G2532
πονηρὸν	εἰς	τῇ	ἀνθρώπους	τῇ	ἔχοντας	τῇ		
grievous	upon	which	the men	which	had	which		
G4190	G1519	G3588	G444	G3588	G2192	G3588		
χάραγμα	τῇ	θηρίου	καὶ	τῇ	τῇ	εἰκόνι	αὐτοῦ	
the mark	which	of the beast	And	which	which	image	his	
G5480	G3588	G2342	G2532	G3588	G3588	G1504	G846	
προσκυνοῦντας								
upon them	which	worshipped						
	G4352							

## Additional Cross-References

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**Revelation 8:7** (Parallel theme): The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.

**Revelation 16:11** (Parallel theme): And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.

**Deuteronomy 28:27** (Parallel theme): The LORD will smite thee with the botch of Egypt, and with the emerods, and with the scab, and with the itch, whereof thou canst not be healed.

