

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

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

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

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

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

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 γῆν 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

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.

