

Revelation 4:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle.

Analysis

And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle.... This verse from Revelation's vision of throne room of heaven - god's sovereignty, holiness, and worship 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

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does Revelation 4:7 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	τὸ	ζῶον	τὸ	πρῶτον	ὅμοιον	λέοντι	καὶ	τὸ
And	G3588	beast	G3588	the first	like	a lion	And	G3588
G2532		G2226		G4413	G3664	G3023	G2532	
δεύτερον	ζῶον	ὅμοιον	μόσχῳ	καὶ	τὸ	τρίτον	ζῶον	
the second	beast	like	a calf	And	G3588	the third	beast	
G1208	G2226	G3664	G3448	G2532		G5154	G2226	
ἔχον	τὸ	πρόσωπον	ὡς	ἄνθρωπος	καὶ	τὸ	τέταρτον	
had	G3588	a face	as	a man	And	G3588	the fourth	
G2192		G4383	G5613	G444	G2532		G5067	
ζῶον	ὅμοιον	ἀετῷ	πετωμένῳ					
beast	like	eagle	a flying					
G2226	G3664	G105	G4072					

Additional Cross-References

Ezekiel 1:10 (Parallel theme): As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle.

Ezekiel 10:14 (Parallel theme): And every one had four faces: the first face was the face of a cherub, and the second face was the face of a man, and the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle.

Ezekiel 10:21 (Parallel theme): Every one had four faces apiece, and every one four wings; and the likeness of the hands of a man was under their wings.

Revelation 4:6 (Parallel theme): And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.

Ezekiel 1:8 (Parallel theme): And they had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides; and they four had their faces and their wings.

Daniel 7:4 (Parallel theme): The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings: I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it.

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