

Revelation 2:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.

Analysis

I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.... This verse from Revelation's vision of letters to ephesus, smyrna, pergamum, thyatira - love lost, faithful suffering, compromise 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

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does Revelation 2:9 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

Οἶδά	σου	τοῦ	ἔργα	καὶ	τοῦ	θλίψιν	καὶ
I know	thy	of them which	works	and	of them which	tribulation	and
G1492	G4675	G3588	G2041	G2532	G3588	G2347	G2532
τοῦ	πτωχείαν	πλούσιος	δὲ	εἶ	καὶ	τοῦ	
of them which	poverty	rich	(but	thou art	and	of them which	
G3588	G4432	G4145	G1161	G1488	G2532	G3588	
βλασφημίαν	τοῦ	λεγόντων	Ἰουδαίους	εἶναι			
I know the blasphemy	of them which	say	Jews	are			
G988	G3588	G3004	G2453	G1511			
ἐαυτούς	καὶ	οὐκ	εἰσὶν	ἀλλὰ	συναγωγὴ	τοῦ	
they	and	not	are	but	are the synagogue	of them which	
G1438	G2532	G3756	G1526	G235	G4864	G3588	
Σατανᾶ							
of Satan							
G4567							

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 3:9 (Parallel theme): Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.

2 Corinthians 8:9 (Parallel theme): For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

Romans 9:6 (Parallel theme): Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel:

2 Corinthians 6:10 (Parallel theme): As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

1 Timothy 6:18 (Parallel theme): That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate;

Luke 4:18 (Parallel theme): The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

Revelation 2:2 (Parallel theme): I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

Luke 6:20 (Parallel theme): And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed be ye poor: for your's is the kingdom of God.

Romans 5:3 (Parallel theme): And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;

Romans 12:12 (Parallel theme): Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;