

Revelation 3:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.

Analysis

And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.... This verse from Revelation's vision of letters to sardis, philadelphia, laodicea - dead religion, faithful witness, lukewarmness 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

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does Revelation 3:1 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	τῷ	ἀγγέλῳ	τῇ	ἐν	Σάρδεσιν	ἐκκλησίᾳς	γράψον·
And	G3588	unto the angel	G3588	in	Sardis	of the church	write
G2532		G32		G1722	G4554	G1577	G1125

Τάδε	λέγει	ό	ἔχεις	τὰ	ἐπτὰ	πνεύματα	τοῦ
These things	saith	G3588	he that hath	G3588	the seven	Spirits	G3588
G3592	G3004		G2192		G2033	G4151	

θεοῦ	καὶ	τοὺς	ἐπτὰ	ἀστέρας·	Οἶδα	σου	τὰ	ἔργα	ὅτι
of God	And	G3588	the seven	G792	I know	thy	G3588	works	that
G2316	G2532		G2033		G1492	G4675	G2041	G3754	

τὸ	ὄνομα	ἔχεις	ὅτι	ζῆς	καὶ	νεκρὸς	εἰ
G3588	a name	he that hath	G3754	G2198	G2532	G3498	G1488
	G3686	G2192					

Additional Cross-References

1 Timothy 5:6 (Parallel theme): But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.

James 2:26 (Spirit): For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

Revelation 1:4 (Spirit): John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne;

Revelation 2:19 (Parallel theme): I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.

Colossians 2:13 (Parallel theme): And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;

Luke 15:24 (Parallel theme): For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

Jude 1:12 (Parallel theme): These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots;

Revelation 1:16 (Parallel theme): And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.

Ephesians 2:5 (Parallel theme): Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

Ephesians 2:1 (Parallel theme): And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;

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