

Revelation 3:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

Analysis

I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.... 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

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does Revelation 3:15 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	τὰ	ἔργα	ὅτι	οὔτε	ψυχρὸς	εἶ	οὔτε
I know	thy	G3588	works	that	neither	cold	thou art	neither
G1492	G4675		G2041	G3754	G3777	G5593	G1488	G3777
ζεστός	ὄφελον	ψυχρὸς	εἷς	ἢ	ζεστός			
hot	I would	cold	thou wert	or	hot			
G2200	G3785	G5593	G1498	G2228	G2200			

Additional Cross-References

Romans 12:11 (Parallel theme): Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;

Matthew 6:24 (Parallel theme): No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

James 1:8 (Parallel theme): A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.

1 Kings 18:21 (Parallel theme): And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.

Revelation 2:4 (Parallel theme): Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

Matthew 24:12 (Parallel theme): And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

Proverbs 23:26 (Parallel theme): My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways.

1 Peter 1:22 (Parallel theme): Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:

Philippians 1:9 (Parallel theme): And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment;

Matthew 10:37 (Parallel theme): He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

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