

Revelation 3

Sardis – Verses 1-6

Sardis was the capital of Lydia and was situated on a high plateau and was thought to be well-protected from invaders.

Sardis, by and large, was a wealthy city and as stated secure. Life is pretty good in Sardis.

Sardis along with Laodicea, are the only two churches where Jesus does not give any commendation. All these churches follow a distinct pattern in Jesus' letters.

Jesus' Address

- Seven deals with perfection or fullness normally in biblical numerology. The Seven Spirits of God is another name for the Holy Spirit.
- John 16:13-15 - ¹³ However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own *authority*, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare *it* to you. ¹⁵ All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore, I said that He will take of Mine and declare *it* to you.

- Jesus and the Holy Spirit are in such unity that if He removes a lampstand, it is a sure sign the Holy Spirit has departed the church.
- The seven stars again, are the seven angels or overseers of the churches. Jesus is in control of the seven stars, and they are in His hand should He desire to remove one.

Jesus' Complaint

- ““I know your deeds; you have a name (reputation) that you are alive, but [in reality] you are dead.”” (AMP)
- Reputation can be a very good thing or a very bad thing.
- The church may have been busy, going through the motions of ministry. They may even be helping a lot of people. The worship might have sounded great and the preacher a great orator, but none of that impressed Jesus.

- Sardis and Laodicea have no commendations from Jesus and both churches seemed to live in relative peace, safety, and prosperity.
- Peace has a bad habit of making us forget God.
- Sardis was an alive and thriving church at one point, but that point is now in the past. The further the past successes, the less impact it will have on present or future ministries.

- Churches that are well established always face the danger of looking back with a sense of longing for the “good ole’ days”.
- When a church’s memories are greater than its dreams and vision, that church will find it on life-support.
- Sardis is the church that had lost its relationship with The Holy Spirit.

- “Pray that, if the Holy Spirit ever leaves your church, you are not six months figuring out what happened” – Kenneth Quick
- “I remind you that there are churches so completely out of the hands of God that if the Holy Spirit withdrew from them, they wouldn't find it out for many months.” – Tozer
- “If the Holy Spirit was withdrawn from the church today, 95 percent of what we do would go on and no one would know the difference. If the Holy Spirit had been withdrawn from the New Testament church, 95 percent of what they did would stop, and everybody would know the difference.” – Tozer

- We cannot separate holiness from the Holy Spirit. Works without holiness have no real spiritual life or benefit to others or ourselves.
- The number one sin of Sardis was their refusal to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit.
- 3 So remember and take to heart the lessons you have received and heard. Keep and obey them, and repent [change your sinful way of thinking, and demonstrate your repentance with new behavior that proves a conscious decision to turn away from sin]. (AMP)

- The church at Sardis had form and function, but no relationship, zero intimacy, with The Holy Spirit.
- There will be no Holy Spirit in the church if He is not first welcomed in the home.
- This church was on spiritual Hospice – The Eighth Letter

Jesus' Correction

- What would Jesus do? Verse 3. Begin to remove people, things or even close the church.
- So many churches miss what the Holy Spirit is doing when key people are pulled out by the Holy Spirit.

Return, repent, reignite.

- 1 Corinthians 4:20 - 20 For the Kingdom of God is not just a lot of talk; it is living by God's power.
- You and I cannot fulfill God's commission without God's power
- 1 Corinthians 2:4-5 - 4 And my message and my preaching were very plain. Rather than using clever and persuasive speeches, I relied only on the power of the Holy Spirit. 5 I did this so you would trust not in human wisdom but in the power of God.

- Jesus' Promise
- 5 He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.

Philadelphia – Verses 7-13

- Jesus' Address:
- “He that is holy and true”. Holiness is how Jesus can judge each man's heart and every church's actions righteously.
- John 5:27 - 27 And He has given Him authority to execute judgment, because He is a Son of Man [sinless humanity, qualifying Him to sit in judgment over mankind]. (AMP)

- True speak of genuine versus falsehood. Jesus was the true King of David.
- Isaiah 22:22 - I will give him the key to the house of David—the highest position in the royal court. When he opens doors, no one will be able to close them; when he closes doors, no one will be able to open them.

Jesus' Commendation

- Philadelphia is commended for three things:
- Faithful to Jesus' Word
- Faithful to Jesus' Name
- Faithful to Jesus' Work

Faithful to Jesus' Word

- John 14:15 - 15 "If you love me, keep my commandments.
- 1 John 2:3-6 - 3 And we can be sure that we know him if we obey his commandments. 4 If someone claims, "I know God," but doesn't obey God's commandments, that person is a liar and is not living in the truth. 5 But those who obey God's word truly show how completely they love him. That is how we know we are living in him. 6 Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did.

Faithful to Jesus' Name

- Faithfulness cannot be based on fear, coercion or even reward. True faithfulness is based only on love. I love Jesus; therefore, I am faithful to Him.
- They were not ashamed of Jesus or to be called a Christian.

- They were determined to be faithful to Jesus and to not be ashamed of Him.
- Romans 1:16 – “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ...”
- Matthew 10:32-33 - 32 “Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. 33 But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.

Faithful to Jesus' Work

- The church in Philadelphia were commended for their faithfulness to keep working, even though they were said to have little strength.
- Stanley Horton - “[Philadelphia was missing] That Divine miracle working power or that power of the Holy Spirit.”
- That does not mean the Holy Spirit was inactive or missing. It may just be they were a small church, a tired or weary church, or maybe they had not yet fully grown into their gifts.

- When think of Jesus' or the Bible's commands; do we think about them as simply rules for holiness when they are so much more?
- To us they may be a list of rules, a bunch of dos and don'ts. We need to realize there are many commands that go beyond holiness.

- The Great Commission is a commandment from Jesus.
- Tithing is a commandment.
- James 1:27 (Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.) is a commandment just as much as “thou shalt not bear false witness”.

- You and I were not commanded to simply have faith, but to live and act faithfully.
- To have faith isn't merely to parrot a talking point, but to live that truth out. This is what the small church in Philadelphia with little strength was doing.
- Living righteously, being faithful to the Jesus' name and still working, ministering, and sharing the Gospel with others, regardless of the cost.

- For a reward for their faithfulness, Jesus promises a new open door to even more effective ministry.
- When you are faithful in the small things, God gives you greater things to do.

- If Jesus was going to open that door, that door would remain open until He shut it.
- Isaiah 22:22 - I will give him the key to the house of David—the highest position in the royal court. When he opens doors, no one will be able to close them; when he closes doors, no one will be able to open them.

Jesus' Admonition

- Hold fast. Don't stumble now.
- 1 Peter 4:10 - God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another. *It is our spiritual gifts that become our heavenly assignment.
- When Jesus speaks of pillars, think of the expression, "Pillar of the community" or "Pillar in the church".

Laodicea – Verses 14-22

- Jesus' Address: Jesus calls Himself the “Amen”, in Hebrew it is “truly” or “it is true”.
- He adds that He is the “Faithful and True Witness”, that is His evidence is unimpeachable, He is never wrong and when He speaks it is so.
- He declares that He was at the beginning of creation, literally the source or ruler of creation.

Jesus' Complaint

- How did an entire church find itself in such a self-absorbed state that they thought they had need of nothing? – Mark Barnard and Kenneth Quick
- [The church at Laodicea was] “No longer hot enough to respond to the Spirit’s moving, not yet cold enough to realize their need, they were neither accomplishing anything for Christ nor responding to His calls for repentance” – Stanley Horton
- *The Amplified Bible puts it this way, being lukewarm is to be spiritually useless.

- When you read verse 17 there is one repeated word, “I”. I am rich, I have everything I want, I don’t need a thing.
- They were self-sufficient not God-sufficient. They looked at what they had and what they had done and they were satisfied.
- Satisfaction is the enemy of a Christian. Satisfaction will always breed complacency.

- Situational contentment is good, Philippians 4:11 & 1 Timothy 6:6 - 6
- Spiritual contentment leads to spiritual apathy.

- The church in Laodicea ceased to look up and they ceased to look out, they only looked within.
- Lukewarm people think about life on earth much more than eternity in Heaven – Francis Chan
- The church's value system was the world's value system.

- They were miserable because their joy was based on what they had and not Who they had.
- They were poor because they had treasure on earth but were not storing up treasures in Heaven.
- They were blind because they were unable to see their true condition because they had blocked out the Holy Spirit.

- Matthew 13:14-16 - 14 And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: 'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand and seeing you will see and not perceive; 15 For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.' 16 But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear.

- They were naked because they were no longer clothed in Jesus' righteousness.
- As long as they were living their best life now, they were good.
- The thought of suffering for Jesus was foreign to them.

- 1 Peter 1:7 - These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So, when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.
- *Heaven's gold is faith in Jesus

Isaiah 55:1-2 - “Is anyone thirsty? Come and drink—
even if you have no money!

Come, take your choice of wine or milk—it’s all free!

² Why spend your money on food that does not give
you strength? Why pay for food that does you no
good? Listen to me, and you will eat what is good. You
will enjoy the finest food

- Verse 19 – Turn and make that conscience effort to change
- Lukewarm people don't really want to be saved from their sin – they want to be saved from the penalty of their sin – Francis Chan

- In verse 20, we see a loving Savior who desires a relationship with them, even after being lukewarm. Look at the other churches, Jesus always gives them a chance to repent, to come back to fellowship with Him.
- Jesus is knocking at the door of the church and He desires to come in and bring life and passion to the church.

- The Overcomers (Verse 21)
- Obedience that mirrors Jesus' obedience is the only way to overcome. Phil. 2:5-11
- “The invitation is for those churches and individuals who no longer burn with the fires of revival, to those that have become institutions instead of movements” – Stanley Horton