

Revelation 3:1-6

Sunday, August 9, 2020

I. The Christians (1a)

II. The Christ (1b)

III. The Commendation (1c)

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V. The Command (2-3a, 6)

VI. The Consequences (3b-5)

A. Negative (3b)

B. Positive (4-5)

I. The Christians (1a)

¹ **“And to the angel of the church in Sardis write,**

A. Leadership

Angel in the Greek language – *angelos* – speaks literally of a messenger, an envoy, one who is sent.

And as we’ve studied and seen each time in going through the letters to the churches, context dictates and communicates the fact that the letter is written not to a literal angel, but first of all to the leadership, the pastor who is accountable, the elders who are responsible to relay the message to the people, to feed and lead the people to Jesus.

B. Fellowship

This time around it’s the church in Sardis.

Sardis is the 5th of the 7 churches, a city next on the postal route there in Asia Minor, 30 miles southeast of Thyatira, and 50 miles due east of Smyrna.

The ancient historian Strabo called it a great city, and at one time it was, having been the capital of the kingdom of Lydia. It was situated at the foot of Mt. Tmolus and within the fertile valley of the River Hermus; it was the converging point of several inland roads so that it had become a place of busy trade and traffic.

Aesop, the famous writer of fables, may have been from Sardis. Gold and silver coins were apparently first minted at Sardis. Sardis claimed to have discovered how to dye wool.

More relevant to our study this morning is the fact that Sardis was located on a hill approximately 1500 feet above the valley floor. And this hill on which Sardis was built had smooth, nearly perpendicular rock walls on the 3 sides. Only from the south could the city be approached, and that was a steep and difficult path. Its location should have made Sardis impregnable, invincible, undefeatable. But, as we'll sadly see later, through complacency and negligence, such was not the case.

II. The Christ (1b)

1b 'These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars:

(Varies slightly from 1:4 – Jesus HAS the 7 spirits in His hands here.)

A. The seven Spirit of God

(Revelation 1:4 – in reference to the Holy Spirit; also in Revelation 4:5)

Revelation 4:5, "And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire *were* burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God."

The fulness of the Spirit, 7 being the number of completion.

Isaiah 11:2, "The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord."

(the church so desperately needed Jesus; the Anointed One, the Anointing of the Spirit) (Jesus baptizes with the Spirit - "...there comes one after me..." (Mark 1:7-8)

B. The seven Stars

We've seen this in Revelation 1:16 and 2:1; we have the interpretation in **Revelation 1:20**, "The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches."

III. The Commendation (1c)

1c "I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive,

Jesus knows their works - in v. 2 we'll see that there was something wrong - even with their works, so Jesus doesn't say too much about their works.

Jesus knew, they had a name, but we'll see later they did not have much life. It's one thing to have sign with your name on it; it's something else to have the signs of life. They were incorporated as a church, they were recognized by man, the name was there on their building, on their letterhead, on their logo, "New Life Church of Sardis,"

By all outward appearances there was every indication of life and vitality, but the bottom line is, the blunt Biblical truth is, God does not see as man sees. Man looks on the outside, but God looks on the inside.

1 Samuel 16:7, "But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For *the Lord* does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.'"

III. The Condemnation (1d)

1^d but you are dead.

Imagine hearing those words in church service – you may attend regularly, even serve faithfully – Jesus gets up to stand and speak, you expect Him to pat you on the back, to give you an applause for the cause, but you hear those words instead...you're dead, you're dead in your sins.

With His infallible knowledge, He pronounced the Sardis church to be **dead**. Like so many churches today it was defiled by the world, characterized by inward decay, and populated by unredeemed people playing church.

This distinguished congregation in Sardis, was in all reality, a spiritual graveyard, Sardis was a cemetery. Dead men walking, working; zealous – zombies. Ephesus was *loveless*; Sardis was *lifeless*. They were nominal Christians, which means by name only.

Some churches are like that. (Dead Protestantism) the movement becomes a machine and eventually a monument.

Some **people** are like that (from relationship, to religion, to a rut)

Jesus knows who's who.

2 Timothy 2:19, "Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: 'The Lord knows those who are His,' and, 'Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.'"

V. The Command (2-3a, 6)

² Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. ³ Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. ⁶ "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." "

A. Watch

Be watchful, give strict attention to, be cautious, lest some sort of calamity come upon you.

The Greek word *gregoreuo* comes to us from a word that means to wake up from sleep; even rise up from the dead.

Pay attention; pray attention.

The command to be watchful was particularly appropriate to Sardis because this almost impregnable city had fallen twice to surprise attacks. The 1st time to the Persian Cyrus, and the 2nd time to Anitochus the Great. History tells us it was because of their failure to watch that Sardis fell. They felt so secure in their walls that they didn't watch and therefore failed to see the climbing Persians soldiers who ascended without observation. It is said that if they would have watched, even a child could have defended the city.

B. Strengthen

To make stable, to make firm; they were an unstable church that needed God's ability for stability.

As a general description they were dead; but there were some people, or some things that remained, that were still alive, but they were very, vulnerable, ready to die, on death's door. The works Jesus spoke of earlier, weren't perfect, or mature, completely right in God's sight.

They were facing the end – if they weren't strengthened.

(Philippians 4:13; Ephesians 6:10; 2 Timothy 2:1)

"Christ exhorted the true Christians at Sardis to fan into flame the dying embers of the remaining spiritual graces in their church."

(2 Timothy 1:6; Hebrews 10:24; 2 Peter 3:1)

C. Remember

Call to mind and be mindful of how you received and heard when you began as a church, as a Christian. By faith they had received the Holy Spirit.

In some ways it's good to compare our walks today, and what our obsessions are, to what our walks were, when we first started.

Galatians 3:3, "Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?"

D. Hold Fast

We need to be vise grips for victory; we must hold fast, stay fastened. I believe with all my heart that Jesus holds us, as Christians and churches, but I also believe that we also, in one sense, need to hold tight to Him.

Not just lip service, but honestly, from the heart; remember the difference between Orpah and Ruth? **Ruth 1:14**, "Then they lifted up their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her."

Romans 12:9b, "...Abhor what is evil. **Cling** to what is good."

E. Repent

(A change of mind leading to a genuine change of heart – U-Turn)

VI. The Consequences (3b-5)

A. Negative (3b)

Therefore ,if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.

(element of loss and element of surprise)

B. Positive (4-5)

⁴ You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. 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.

1. They will walk with Jesus

Working for Christ is great, it's expected, but it must never be done, it cannot be done for long, without walking with Christ.

2. They will walk in white with Jesus

(clothed in His righteousness, we walk with Him)

*"Specifically, Christ says of them that **they will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.** In ancient times, such garments were worn for celebrations and festivals. Because they refused to defile their garments, Christ would replace those humanly preserved clean garments with divinely pure ones (cf. 7:14). The white robes of purity Christ promises here and in verse 5 (cf. 6:11; 7:9, 13; 19:8, 14) are elsewhere worn by Christ Himself (Matt. 17:2; Mark 9:3) and the holy angels (Matt. 28:3; Mark 16:5; Acts 1:10). Those who have a measure of holiness and purity now will be given perfect holiness and purity in the future."* – Bible Knowledge Commentary

3. Their names will not be blotted out of the Book of Life

(Special Books are mentioned - Exodus 32:33; Philippians 4:3) (Revelation 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27; 22:19)

Revelation 20:15, "And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire."

Exodus 32:33, "And the Lord said to Moses, 'Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book.'"

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."

⁶ "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." '