

The Church at Sardis

Revelation 3:1-3

I. Introduction:

A. The churches of Asia Minor

In Jesus' messages to the 1st 4 of the 7 churches, He addressed distinct circumstances in each.

1. – Ephesus

- a. The church that left its first love. Their love for Jesus and the ministry had cooled.
- b. Jesus called this church to repent and do the first works.

2. – Smyrna

- a. Jesus had no condemnation for them, only commendation & encouragement for the persecuted church. Christians in Smyrna were executed for their faith, martyred.

3. – Pergamum

- a. Church settled in the world. They're guilty of doctrines of Balaam & the Nicolaitans
- b. Jesus called this church to repent or He would come quickly & fight against them.

4. – Thyatira

- a. This church in idolatry embraced the false teaching of the false prophetess Jezebel.
- b. Jesus had strong words of warning against her & those following her sinful teaching.

B. Sardis

Few points of interest regarding this city will shed light on Jesus' saying to this church at Sardis.

1. – Glorious heritage

- a. Sardis had been capital of Lydian Empire which existed from 1200 B.C. to 546 B.C.
- b. The city was known for its great wealth which reached its apex under **King Croesus**

2. – Pride and Disaster

- a. King Croesus took Sardis to its grandest heights, but also it was under his leadership that the city suffered its greatest disaster and loss.
- b. Sardis was built on a 1500-foot plateau w/ 1 steep path up the mountain to the city.
- c. The city was considered militarily impregnable.
- d. War: Croesus went to war w/ Cyrus, King of Persia. Croesus' army was defeated on battlefield & retreated w/ his remaining forces to Sardis where he couldn't be reached
- e. On one side of the city was a sheer wall that rose 1500-feet to the city wall. **Heroides** led a small group of Persian soldiers in a climb up that sheer wall.
- f. No Guard: When they reached the wall of the city there were no guards. The Persian soldiers opened the gates for the rest of the army and the city fell in one night.

II. Introduction From Jesus:

Sardis is known as the dead church for it looked alive on outside, but was spiritually dead inside.

A. He who has the seven Spirits of God.

- 1. As God, Jesus can impart the Holy Spirit. Holy Spirit brings life to that which is dead
- 2. It's a most applicable introduction considering Jesus was speaking to a dead church.
- 3. The church at Sardis needed the Holy Spirit to work in their midst.
- 4. Application: Same is true in our individual lives. Many play Christian game by joining a church, attending services, or doing Christian things, yet, they're spiritually dead.
- 5. The Holy Spirit has never come into their lives and made them a new creation in Jesus.

B. Jesus holds the seven stars.

1. These stars represent the messengers or pastors of the seven churches.
2. Church belongs to Jesus, thus pastors of His church belong to Him & are in His hand.
3. Jesus reminded the church at Sardis that He is the head of the church.

III. **Condemnation**

A. No commendation for this church

1. There was no point of positive ministry to commend.
2. They had a reputation for being a thriving church with a vigorous ministry.
3. All that religious activity was useless and powerless.
4. Application: Some churches look fantastic outwardly, but Jesus would call them dead
5. There are three things that will kill a church. (lose the spiritual life)
 - a. – Lack of sound doctrine
 - i. A church that lacks consistent biblical teaching will become spiritually weak, unstable, and spiritually sick and will lose its spiritual focus & direction.
 - ii. Paul told Timothy in **2 Timothy 3:16** that the Word of God is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness.
 - b. – Lack of evangelism
 - i. A church that stops telling people how to be saved will die while becoming both selfish, self-centered and focused on less important things.
 - c. – Sinful compromise (The first two lead to the third!)
 - i. Church that lacks consistent biblical teaching & loses its focus on sharing the Gospel will soon compromise w/ the world. Sin will become norm in the church.

IV. **Jesus' instruction (Revelation 3:2-3)**

A. Be watchful!

1. Jesus was saying, don't be like a city with no guards on the walls. Jesus said to this church, "Wake up and watch." Wake up spiritually and be alert.
2. For what were they to watch? The same three things discussed.
 - a. Watch for sound doctrine and teaching.
 - b. Watch and be sure to focus on sharing the Gospel.
 - c. Watch out for sin. (**1 Peter 5:8**)

B. A full recovery

For this church to make a full recovery, Jesus told them to do three things.

1. – Remember
 - a. Remember how you received Gospel & were saved. Don't let your faith grow dull.
 - b. Keep remembering how good it is to be saved and walk with Jesus.
2. – Repent
 - a. Turn away from the sin and error you are in. Desire righteousness.
3. – Hold fast
 - a. Keep His commands. Don't be moved from the Word of God.
4. Application: Same steps work in a life or in the life of a church today: a. Remember how good it was to be saved. b. Repent from sin. c. Hold fast to God's Word.

C. Sudden destruction

1. If they didn't watch they'd be like city they lived. Anytime Jesus would appear & judge
2. Application: Jesus said His 2nd coming would be like this, appearing when the world least expects it.
3. Paul said the world will not be watching when Jesus returns. (**1 Thessalonians 5:1-4**)