

A Journey Into the Heavens
Sardis - The Dead Church
October 28, 2015

The church at Sardis is the fifth church to receive a letter from the Lord Jesus in Revelation 2&3. Like the other six, this was an actual church at the time John wrote the book of Revelation.

I. The _____ (3:1)

Sardis was the capital of ancient Lydia and was about 30 miles southeast of Thyatira. Centuries before the time of Christ it was politically, militarily, and economically one of the most important cities in Asia. Its prosperity was partially the result of its geographical location as the junction of _____ main trade routes.

Though it had retained its wealth, Sardis was no longer a famous and important city. Because of its wealth, the citizens of Sardis lived in luxury, which led to a moral decadence and decline. In John's time it was known as a wealthy and wicked city, existing on past _____. Apparently, the church at Sardis became like the city, as we will see later in this lesson.

II. The _____ (3:4)

There were only a few in Sardis who had remained faithful. Our Lord describes them as "those who have not defiled their garments..." The word defiled simply means "filthy, dirty, or polluted." The Lord desires _____ and _____ garments! (Revelation 19:8&14)

Having "undefiled garments" means keeping one's character unspotted by the world. To those believers our Lord promises "...and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy (3:4b).

To those who live righteously, the promise is they shall be clothed in white. Revelation 19:8 explains the white robes are symbolic of "... the righteousness of the saints..." not the righteousness of God. Thus, this clothing refers to a special _____ for those who have lived righteous lives.

III. The _____ (3:1c & 2d)

It seems at one time the church at Sardis had the reputation of being a vibrant, spiritual church. However, at the time Christ sent this letter, He pronounced them spiritually dead (3:1c).

To get a better idea of what the Lord means by the use of the word dead in a spiritual sense, we need to look at His message to the Pharisees in Matthew 23:27-28.

The problem with the Christians at Sardis was not one of false doctrine like the believers at Thyatira, or opposition like the believers at Smyrna. Instead, the Sardis church was living on its past _____. Their loyalty and service to Christ was all in the past. They were nothing more than a corpse that looked alive from the outside but within was filled with hypocrisy and iniquity.

There are many churches today like the church of Sardis. In major cities in this country there are huge church buildings that were once nationally known for preaching the gospel, reaching the lost, and evangelizing the world. However, today the buildings stand only as large _____ of what used to be. No longer is the Word of God preached and taught as the most important mission of the church.

Instead, these churches are nothing more than welfare stops, being more concerned with the social needs of people than with their spiritual needs. Many of these congregations appear to be spiritually alive, but under close examination we find they are spiritually dead.

Our Lord also condemns the Sardis church by saying ... for I have not found they works perfect before God (Rev 3:2b). Each of the previous four churches we have studied had some good works for which Christ commends them as a whole, but this church had _____ for which it could be praised collectively. Some of the works at Sardis may have been impressive to people, but not before God.

IV. The _____ (3:2a & 3)

It appears that some of the believers in the church were barely hanging on - the Lord describes them as ready to die. Yet, the situation was not totally hopeless if steps were taken to strengthen the things which remain! The way to do this “strengthening” was: Remember therefore how thou has received and heard...(3:3a). They were to remember two things: the salvation they had received, and the things they had heard!

The believers at Sardis were to remember... and repent. Only in remembering how things used to be could they realize their present condition and _____ their spiritual vitality.

Unless the church at Sardis repents, Christ says , I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee (Rev. 3:3). As a thief means “by surprise” just as Sardis had been defeated by Cyrus a long time before. Coming as a thief probably does not refer to the Second Coming but rather to Christ’s coming against them in _____.

V. The _____ (3:5-6)

Since we have already discussed what it means to be clothed in white raiment, lets move on to our Lord’s second word of comfort... and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life (Rev. 3:5).

This is one of the most misinterpreted verses in the Bible. It is NOT a _____ to the unfaithful, but a word of COMFORT to the _____. To make the continuance of our salvation dependent upon good works would undermine the entire purpose of salvation by grace and would also contradict other Scriptures in the Word of God!

A possible explanation of the statement may be seen in the spiritual security of infants and innocent young children who have not reached the age of accountability. The book of life, as the name clearly implies, contains the names of all who have had the blessing of life. In other words, all who have ever been conceived in the womb have their names written in the Book of Life.

Therefore, when a child dies before reaching the age of accountability (the age of recognizing he or she is a sinner), they will go to Heaven because their names are written in the Book of Life. However, when a child comes to the point in life when he or she is conscious of being a sinner and then continues in sin until death without repenting, his or her name is finally and irrevocably _____ out of the book of life.

The third word of comfort from our Lord is ... I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. When you publicly confess your faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior that is your guarantee of being confessed before the Father!

Christ ends His letter to Sardis with the same exhortation He has given to all the other churches, He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. DID WE HEAR THE MESSAGE??