

“Sardis: The Church of the Dying”

Revelation 3:1-6

Last Sunday: The Study of Thyatira, the Church of the Tolerant

Today: The Study of Sardis, the Church of the Dying

Five Parts to Each of These Seven Letters:

- Description: Christ’s self-description; to understand the commendation/rebuke (3:1a)
- Rebuke: What the church is doing wrong (3:1b)
- Exhortation: Urging the church to take action (3:2-3)
- Commendation: What the church is doing right (3:4a)
- Promise: If you overcome, you will receive this reward. (3:4b-6)

Sardis, the City:

- 33 miles southeast of Thyatira
- Capital of the ancient empire of Lydia; the Pactolus River served as a moat and had gold.
- Rich city with a theatre, stadium, temples, and a beautiful marble road for the main street
- Built on a hill, 1500 feet higher than the main road; called the “Impregnable City”

Sardis, the Church:

- No commendation for the whole church; just a few who are doing right
- The church is dead (or dying), but not due to age, persecution, or people leaving.
- Unlike other churches, there is no persecution or heresy.
- ***Historicist:*** This is the church of the Protestant Reformation (1517-1793). It had a reputation for being alive, yet they were dying or stagnant because the disciples of the Reformers could not agree on many doctrines, resulting in disunity and denominationalism.

3:1a “The words of him who has the seven spirits of God”

Is. 11:2 references the Holy Spirit and a prophecy that the Messiah would be empowered not by seven individual spirits but by the one Holy Spirit, described in seven ways:

1. The Spirit of the LORD (Yahweh) shall rest upon him
2. The Spirit of wisdom (skillful living)
3. The Spirit of understanding
4. The Spirit of counsel (good advice)
5. The Spirit of might
6. The Spirit of knowledge (a continuum meaning cunning or truthfulness)
7. The Spirit of the fear of the Lord (awesome reverence)

3:1b/ “You are dead.” Three ways the term is used in Scripture:

1. A person or entity that is physically dead (Gen. 5)
2. A person or entity that is spiritually dead (without faith)
 - a. Eph. 2:1-2, “You were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked...”
3. A person or entity that is spiritually asleep
 - a. Eph. 5:14, “Awake O sleeper, and rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

How was the Sardis church considered dead or dying?

Perhaps in failing to keep the Great Commission:

- Mt. 28:19, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...”
- Mk. 16:15, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to all of creation.”
- Lk. 24:47-48, “Repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning with Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.”
- Jn. 20:21, “As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.”
- Ac. 1:8, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.”

3:2-3/ The Sardis Church Five-Fold Exhortation:

1. Wake up
2. Strengthen what remains
3. Remember what you have received and heard
4. Keep it
5. Repent (*Metanoia* – a change of mind that results in a change of action)
 - a. Happened at Justification
 - b. Happens in Sanctification
 - i. Bruce Gore, “Wake up every morning repentant ... with a despair of your own goodness and a new commitment to serve Christ and realize anything we could do is the work of God’s grace in us.”

3:5/ Blotted out? This is hypothetical OR there remain two options:

1. The Lamb’s Book of Life has every person’s name who has ever lived. Once you die, if you have never come to Christ, your name will be blotted out from the Book of Life.
2. At the Great White Throne judgment, only believers’ names are found in the Book of Life.

Whatever Happened to Sardis, the Church of the Dying?