

SARDIS

Int.

1. Aim: to give an explanation of this letter and to make applications to us by noting lessons we learn.
2. Rev. 3:1-6
3. The city of SARDIS
 - a. Today it is in ruins - ceased to exist
 - b. But at one time it was a flourishing city.
 - c. It was the capital of Lydia under Croesus in 560 B.C. It was famous for the gold found in its rivers. Gold coins were first minted here! Money had its beginning here. Croesus long enjoyed the reputation of being one of the world's richest kings.
 - d. The city was built on a spur of Mt. Tmolous. Three sides of the plateau were about 1500 ft. high and people felt they were unscalable. Citizens felt a few guards on the main causeway could protect the city.
 - e. Cyrus the Great of Persia was trying to take the city. He offered a reward for any soldier who could find the way to enter the city. A soldier named Hycroeades saw a soldier in the city of Sardis drop his helmet over the wall and down the cliff. He watched how he got down and how he got back up. That night a group of soldiers went up the side of the mountain into an unguarded city and were able to defeat them.
 - f. The same event occurred 200 years later.
 - g. Sardis was destroyed by an earthquake in 17 A.D. & the Roman emperor sent funds to rebuild it and cancelled their taxes for 5 years. But the city never regained its former importance.

4. The Moral Climate of Sardis
 - a. Most prominent temple was for the mother-goddess = CYBELE
 - b. The worship of her resulted in immorality of the worst sort
5. The Church
 - a. We have no record of when it was established
 - b. This is the only thing in the Bible about this church.
 - c. The church often becomes like its community !
6. The Letter
 - a. Short - only 6 verses
 - b. Organization about like the others -- int. of speaker, evaluation of the church, church admonished, praise of the faithful few, and promise to the victor.

Discussion

I. INTRODUCTION OF SPEAKER V.1a

- A. "And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; these things saith he that hath the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars;"
- B. "...seven spirits of God..."
 1. The number seven indicates fullness and He is said to possess the Spirit without measure.
 2. "For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the spirit by measure unto him." Jn. 3:34
 3. There was no limit to his power, he had complete power
 4. With this power Christ was able to convict the church of its sin!

C. "...and the seven stars..."

1. This means he has the angels of the church under his authority
2. Rev. 1:20 said the stars were the angels so it just shows plainly that he had them under his control and they only told what they were directed to tell by Christ

II. EVALUATION OF THE CHURCH v.1b

A. "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead."

B. Their Reputation

1. Reputation is what men think of us or say of us.
 - a. This church had a good reputation, - "thou hast a name that thou livest..."
 - b. They must have been a church with a large membership, beautiful building, wealth, and sound doctrine.
 - c. She was praised by the lips of many.---Appeared to be an active church
 - d. To an outsider looking on they would see the ideal church
2. Ephesus had her Nicolaitans; Pergamos had her Balaamites, and Thyatira her Jezebelites; but Sardis was free from false teachers and false doctrines.
3. This church had little opposition because it did not stand for anything. Where the church stands for the truth, there is bound to be opposition to it.

C. Their CHARACTER

1. Reputation is what man thinks of us, and Character is what we really are as God sees us with perfect knowledge and power

2. It had a name for being a living, active church; but the great Heart-searcher, who sees not as a man sees, pronounced it dead.¹
3. You can hide a bad character from man and have a good reputation. But you can't hide it from God.
4. That was the trouble with this church. Inwardly they were dead!
 - a. They were a dead LIVING CHURCH.
 - b. They were dead inwardly or spiritually.
 - c. The works which did remain were ready to die!
5. As in animals you may see muscular movements after life is gone, So Sardis was dead and all that could be seen were the ghastly twitchings of a corpse. As evidence of her lifeless state, no persecutions were leveled against this church. Why should Satan and his cohorts trouble themselves about a corpse?
6. This must have been quite a shock to these people because they were used to praise from men and here Christ flatly condemns them and tells them what they really are like!
7. I Tim. 5:6 NKJV "But she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives."
8. The condition of the city was reflected in the condition of the church.
9. It was a dead church in a dead town !

¹ The Seven Churches of Asia by James M. Tolle P. 58

III. ADMONITION OF THE CHURCH v.2-3

- A. "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God."
- B. Exhortation
1. Get busy and establish the things that remain which are not dead
 2. They should arouse themselves to a faithful performance of the Lord's work
 3. The word "strengthen" means "to make stable"
 4. Be watchful --surely we need to do this today because we have temptations from sources unexpected
 5. Their works had been weighed and found wanting. [not perfect]
 6. Some of them were weak and about ready to die. The strong members have a responsibility to the weak members.
 - a. Gal.6:1-2
 - b. Rom.15:1 "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves."
- C. "Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." - v.3
- D. Their instruction
1. Remember - their memory was turned to the past for the sake of the present.
Remember your past state and get back to it!
 - a. The parable of the sower and the seed - Mk.4:16-17

- b. This was the stony ground type Christian who heard and obeyed but when the going got rough they withered and died

2. Repent

- a. Decide to turn back to their former zeal for the church
- b. If they remember the word of God which they obeyed, it will bring them to life again and make them see their own spiritual condition. This will bring them to godly sorrow and repentance.

E. Warning

1. If they did not watch he would destroy them
2. He would come on them like a thief - unexpectedly, and they would be unprepared. He will come secretly and suddenly.
3. It could mean that Christ would pass some judgment on them if they did not change their ways.
4. It could also mean that we better be ready for the second coming of Christ, because when he comes those who are caught unfaithful will not have another chance to amend their ways.
5. No one knows when the Lord will come, either in providence through punishment or in person at the last day!

IV. PRAISE OF THE FAITHFUL FEW v. 4

- A. "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with men in white: for they are worthy."
- B. Faithful few
 1. There were a few members of the church who had not followed the majority off into carelessness and sin

2. They had not defiled their garments!!
 3. When we obey the Gospel we become purified from all sin.
 4. If we do not allow our lives to be contaminated with evil then we have kept our garments [or lives] clean and white.
 5. They had been true to their God all the way.
 6. The faithful few keep the church going !
- C. Their reward for being faithful
1. Walk with Christ in white
 2. To walk with him means that they were to be saved!
- D. For they are worthy
1. They have the kind of character which God recognizes as worthy of salvation.
 2. They deserve this
 3. God and Christ are the only ones that are truly worthy, but there is a worthiness that comes through faithful living that attaches to the follower of Christ through close fellowship with him.

V. PROMISE TO THE VICTOR v.5-6

- A. "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels."
- B. They were not hopelessly dead
1. It was possible for any member of the congregation to free himself from the death-grip of their sins - Eph. 5:14
 2. The condition was for them to overcome.

- C. White raiment
 - 1. White is a symbol of purity
 - 2. The robe of victory for those who overcome
- D. Their name will not be blotted out of the book of life
 - 1. The book of life refers to the list of those who are God's own people, those who are faithful
 - 2. The implication is if they did not overcome their names would be blotted out of the book of life - Rev. 20:15
- E. Christ would confess them before God and his angels
 - 1. Mt. 10:32,33
 - 2. Christ will acknowledge the faithful before God
- F. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." v.6
 - 1. Individual response
 - 2. We all must do it separately

CONCLUSION

Lessons we can learn from the church at SARDIS

- 1. Reputation & Character are not the same thing
 - a. Reputation is human evaluation
 - b. Character is Divine evaluation
 - c. Strive to build character not reputation

2. We can do better
 - a. Even a dead living church had a chance to repent
 - b. Watch - strengthen - repent
 - c. A person may be overtaken in sin and be dead - but he/she can become faithful and alive again
 3. The faithful are worthy
 - a. Worthy of reward
 - b. God recognizes real character as being worthy of rewards
 4. Those who walk undefiled will enter heaven
 - a. Walk - refers to living
 - b. Undefiled means not spotted or contaminated by sin
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5. Has your name been written in heaven?
 - a. This means you must obey the gospel in order to be saved!
 - b. Is your name still recorded in the book of life ?
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