

LETTER TO THE CHURCH AT SARDIS

Introduction:

1. Sardis was located about 35 miles southeast of Thyatira.
 2. It was a city in decline – with an appearance of life, but in its final breaths.
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- I. Salutation Revelation 3:1a
 - A. The Greek name Sardis is actually plural for there were two cities.
 - B. Sardis was considered so well situated that no human defense was needed.
 1. In fact, twice in its history the city had been captured by its enemies.
 2. The first was accomplished by Cyrus in 546 BC.
 3. The second was accomplished by Antiochus in 218 BC.
 - C. Sardis was a city of great wealth.
 - D. The primary gods worshipped in Sardis were Cybele, Artemis, Zeus, Hades, and Persephone.
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- II. Description of Jesus Revelation 3:1b
 - A. Jesus is called the One who has the “seven Spirits of God.”
 - B. Jesus is called the One who has the “seven stars.”
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- III. Commendation Revelation 3:4
 - A. The only commendation for Sardis was that there were a few members of the church who were undefiled.
 - B. How sad it is to consider that even the church God has only a faithful few (cf. Matthew 9:37; 22:14; 1 Kings 19:18; Romans 11:4-5; etc.).
 - C. Despite the sinfulness in Sardis, there were still those faithful to God who practiced pure, undefiled religion (cf. James 1:27).
 1. They had not defiled their garments with sin (cf. Revelation 7:14; 19:8; Jude 1:23).
 2. Thus, they could walk with the Lord, dressed in pure, white clothing.
 3. Because of their faithfulness, the Lord had made them worthy (cf. 2 Thessalonians 1:5; etc.).
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- IV. Condemnation Revelation 3:1-2
 - A. Sardis was the church of the living dead.
 - B. The town had a vibrant history and a reputation for luxury and wealth; but, at present, it was decaying and headed toward ruin.
 - C. Likewise, the church had a name and a reputation of being alive and thriving; but, in truth, they were dead.
 - D. Jesus knew the works of this congregation.
 1. He knew their past works, which seem to have been good.
 2. However, he also knew that they were resting on past works.
 3. Their present works were not perfect (complete) – they had become lazy, tired, and complacent.
 4. A heritage of past faithfulness does not guarantee present approval.

The Book of Revelation

Lesson Eight

Revelation 3:1-6

5. A busy congregation does not equal a faithful congregation – we must be engaged in the right works.
 6. The brethren in Sardis had not finished what they had started.
- E. He knew the reputation of this congregation.
- F. He knew the needs of this congregation.
1. They needed to watch – to be on guard.
 - a. Twice, the city of Sardis had been conquered because her soldiers were asleep when they should have been watching.
 - b. Likewise, the church had gone to sleep, and the enemy had taken over.
 - c. Jesus literally says, “Become awake and on the watch!”
 2. They needed to strengthen the things that had not yet died.
 - a. What things remained were in grave danger of perishing.
 - b. Thus, they needed to work to reestablish their good works.
 - c. The word “strengthen” means, “to make stable, to render constant, to make firm.”
 - d. They needed a revival, for their salt had lost its power!
 - e. Apathy is a sin that will destroy a congregation.
 3. They needed to recognize how near they were to death!
- I. The church at Sardis was its own worst enemy.
1. They had no false teachers like Balaam or the Nicolaitanes.
 2. They had no evil corruptor like Jezebel.
 3. They had simply become pew-sitters instead of go-getters.
- V. Warnings Revelation 3:3 b
- A. If they refused to wake up, be on guard and repent, Jesus would become their enemy and come upon them as a thief.
 - B. This had happened to the city twice – would it also happen to the church?
 - C. If it did happen, they would not even know when the Lord had cast them off and removed their candlestick.
- VI. Exhortations Revelation 3:3 a
- A. They were exhorted to remember – the Truth.
 - B. They were exhorted to react – to hold fast and to keep what they had.
 - C. They were exhorted to repent.
- VII. Blessings Revelation 3:5-6
- A. Those who overcome will be clothed in white.
 1. Again, white clothes are a symbol of purity and forgiveness.
 2. We must be clothed in white to be wed to the Lord (Matt. 22:11-12).
 - B. Those who overcome will not be blotted out of the book of life.
 1. To have one’s name written in the book means salvation (21:27).
 2. To have one’s name removed means condemnation (20:15).
 - C. Those who overcome will be confessed by the Lord before the Father (cf. Matthew 10:32-33).