

Revelation 3:1-6

Σάρδεις

Outline:

- I. SALUTATION AND NAME OF CHURCH IDENTIFIED, Verse 1
- II. IDENTIFICATION OF CHRIST AS SENDER, Verse 1
- III. ASSERTION OF KNOWLEDGE, Verse 1
- IV. COMMENT AND CONCERN, Verses 1-2
- V. EXHORTATION, Verse 3-4
- VI. PROMISED BLESSING, Verse 5
- VII. ADMONITION TO HEED, Verse 6



- I. SALUTATION AND NAME OF CHURCH IDENTIFIED, Verse 18

A. Sardis

1. Sardis was located about 50 kilometers south east of Thyatira
2. Sardis was the capital of the ancient Lydian empire.
3. In the past this was a very great city.
4. Much of the history of this city's spirituality is similar to that of the other cities we have already looked at. There was much Idolatry and immorality that was being practiced. Different pagan deities that ere worshiped and temples that were venerated in their pagan worship practices.
5. The location of the city was, militarily speaking, very defendable.
 - a) The city was situated about 290 - 460 meters high on a peninsula shaped precipice overlooking the valley of Hermus. Because of it's situation this city was *ostensibly* impenetrable.

- b) However the cliff face was made of clay and so it gave way to erosion quite easily thus forming cracks big enough to be scaled all the way to the top where entrance to the city was obtained. It was these cracks that enemies of the city would exploit in order to penetrate the city and thus over take it.
- c) The city was over taken at least two times that we know of in history.
- d) Both times this city was taken it was by surprise, at night, via scaling the cracks in the cliff face that lead up to the city.
 - (1) 549 BC Cyrus
 - (2) 214 BC Antiochus

II. IDENTIFICATION OF CHRIST AS SENDER, Verse 1

A. "These things saith he that hath the seven spirits"

- 1. Revelation 1:4. This is another way to describe the fulness of the Spirit of God.
- 2. Here Jesus says that He is the one that "has the seven spirits". This is a direct claim to having the fullness of the Spirit of God.
- 3. This is an "allusion to the sevenfold character of the Holy Spirit as resting upon Christ according to the prophecy of Isaiah 11:2-5.

B. "and the seven stars"

- 1. This is the second time that Jesus makes reference to the seven stars in addressing the churches. The first time was to the church in Ephesus, Revelation 2:1.
- 2. The Seven stars are the messengers of or to the seven churches. We saw that in Revelation 1:20.
- 3. The messengers of Jesus are in Jesus' hand. What this signifies is His calling and protecting of these messengers but also the great accountability that church leaders have to Jesus and so He reminds them that He is the one who is holding them in His hand.

C. In that Christ introduces Himself as the one who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars, He points out that these qualities that He possesses insures righteous judgment of the wicked. Revelation 5:6

III. ASSERTION OF KNOWLEDGE, Verse 1

A. "I Know thy works"

- 1. Jesus simply states that he has knowledge of their works but He doesn't elaborate. With the other churches he did.

2. Evidently there were a few things that they were doing that were, at the least, noticeable. However, the issue of concern that Jesus brings up with this church was so important that it superseded any and all good works that were worth mentioning. So he gets straight to the point with no commendation!

3. "Like the letter to Laodicea it is an unmixed message of rebuke and censor."¹

IV. COMMENT AND CONCERN, Verses 1-2

A. "that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead."

1. With this church and Laodicea Jesus did not have anything good to say about them.

2. The problem was that they had *a name to live* but the reality was that *they were dead*.

a) A name to live:

(1) They were the church, they were christians, disciples of Jesus Christ and recipients of the Gospel of grace.

(2) This is what they were by name and what they were known for. So they were christians in name only. Nominally christians, nominally disciples, nominally believers in Jesus etc...

b) But in reality they were dead:

(1) An appearance of christianity and godliness but, according to Christ's words, absolutely no inward reality.

(2) They were dead! This does not mean somewhat dead or about to die but absolutely and resolutely dead.

(3) False professors of the faith. An empty profession because they in reality were dead as all false professors are.

c) Matthew 7:21-22 "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?"

d) Luke 6:46 "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"

B. "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God."

¹ John F. Walvoord, The Revelation of Jesus Christ, pg.78

1. Pay attention to those things which you once had and even the little that you still have and be watchful, take caution and strengthen that which you have.
2. Their works were not perfect or completed before God. They left of seeking and abiding in Christ.

V. EXHORTATION, Verse 3-4

A. "Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent."

1. This church has not always been in this state of deadness. This call to remembrance tells us that. There was a good start to this church but something happened along the way to cause them to loose their way.
2. As we come to this church in Revelation we see that they were living in hypocrisy. They were indeed living a lie!
 - a) In Ephesus we saw a church that had left their first love. That was the beginning of a problem. But in Sardis we find their leaving off of following the Lord in a very progressed state.
3. There was only one remedy, repent!

B. "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."

1. *Not watching* is an allusion to the cities history. Christ was bringing a warning to them that they would all grasp.
2. Jesus is talking specifically to the church and not to the world. Jesus is not coming back as a thief in the night for worldlings but for his church. The thief appearance of Christ is that sudden appearance of Christ that is not preceded necessarily by anything and it primarily has to do with the church being taken out of this world.
3. The illusion to thief appearing of Christ is to say to the church at Sardis that unless they repent your judgment will be just as my second coming, swift, sudden and irrevocable.
4. This has such great amounts of personal application.
 - a) Are we watching and paying attention?
 - (1) The word watchful up above is the same greek word as is used in 1 Peter 5:8 which says... "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." The only difference is that in Revelation the word is in the present tense, active voice and in 1 Peter it is used in the aorist tense, active voice and imperative mood.

- C. “Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.”
1. The Lord speaks of a faithful remnant within the church in Sardis that had not gone the way of the vast majority. They were those that, like in verse 3, were remembering the things that they had received and heard and were holding to it.
 2. The Lord has his people in all places.
 - a) “There are thousands in Christendom who, though linked with much that is unscriptural and often almost undistinguishable from the masses are yet plainly discernible to His eye, for it is written, ‘The Lord knoweth them that are His.’ “²

VI. PROMISED BLESSING, Verse 5

- 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.”
1. Salvation is illustrated in being clothed with clean and white garments.
 2. All the good that an individual can muster up is not enough to secure them one of these clean, unspotted garments. Though the good deeds of men can look very good, God is not impressed by them because even the best we can offer is tainted by our exceedingly sinful, totally depraved and wicked nature.
 - a) Jeremiah 17:9 “The heart [is] deceitful above all [things], and desperately wicked: who can know it?”
 - b) Romans 3:12 “They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.”
 3. “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.” Matthew 10:32
- B. “I will not blot out his name out of the book of life”
1. Jesus doesn’t say that he will blot your name out of the book of life but rather that he won’t blot out someone's name.
 2. Since Christ died for all the human race then it would be logical to think of this book of life as an all inclusive book. In other words it includes the name of every living soul that the the Lord God has ever brought into being. Therefore we all start having our names in the book and through the course of life (as our age exceeds the age of accountability) when we are met with the gospel, challenged and convicted thereby, we either repent and believe and therefore our name remains in the book, or, we reject Christ and his free gift of eternal life and have our name concretely and irrevocably stricken from the record.

² H.A. Ironside, Revelation, pg. 42

VII. ADMONITION TO HEED, Verse 6

A. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."