

Letters from Jesus: Sardis!

Revelation 3:1-6

Today we will look into the 5th letter of the 7 letters to the churches of Revelation. Each of these letters have the basic same structure with 7 points. There is a slight variation in some of the letters, one we will see today as we look at the letter to the church in Sardis.

I. Correspondent, church & city!

Sardis was a wealthy city, the capital of the Lydian Kingdom, but it had seen its best days as it was a city in decline as we will see.

Its wealth had come from gold that was found in the Pactolus River. Coins were actually first minted in Sardis.

It also prospered from wool production. It is also believed to be the first place to dye wool.

Sardis is about 30 miles south of Thyatira and was built on top of a hill 1500 feet high. It had perpendicular rock walls on 3 sides making it nearly

impossible to capture. It was said that to capture Sardis was to do the impossible.

Aesop of Aesop's fables came from Sardis.

The city worshipped the goddess Cybele, also known as Artemis or Diana.

Revelation 3:1a, "To the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars."

The seven stars are the messengers who brought the words of Revelation to the churches. Jesus was the one who held the seven spirits of God. Those spirits are named in:

Isaiah 11:2, "The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord."

This is important because it shows us how Jesus works in the churches and it is by The Holy Spirit.

Now, this is where Jesus flips His normal flow in this letter. Instead of going into His commendation here He goes to the concern.

II. Concern

Revelation 3:1b, “I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead.”

Revelation 3:2b, “for I have found your deeds unfinished in the sight of my God.”

First, it appeared alive but was dead.

Have you ever looked at the stars in the sky at night? The light you see left those stars years ago. If one of those stars, let’s say, is 30 light years away and that star actually exploded 5 years ago we won’t know it for another 25 years. It looks like it is still there shining bright, but it’s gone! That is just like the church in Sardis. It appears to be alive, but it isn’t.

The people of that church were not transformed. They were either still lost or at best, saved yet unchanged. An undisciplined believer.

John MacArthur says there are 4 signs of a dead church. They are:

1. When it is more concerned with material than spiritual things.
2. When it is more concerned with what men think than what God said.

3. When it is more enamored with doctrinal creeds and systems of theology than with the Word of God.
4. When it loses its conviction that every word of the Bible is the word of God Himself.

This church is full of the walking dead. They are still walking around, talking, eating, but they are dead and just don’t know it.

III. Commendation

Revelation 3:4, “Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy.”

In this dead church there are still a few, not many, but a few that God has preserved.

The word “soiled” here means exactly what it says. It is stained, defiled, smeared, polluted...soiled. And this remnant have avoided this end. Jesus then says that he will dress them in white...not stained!

How special is white in reflecting purity and especially in a culture that doesn’t have tide pods.

IV. Command

Revelation 3:2a, “Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die,”

Revelation 3:3, “Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; hold it fast, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.”

Jesus provides a path to spiritual restoration in 5 steps here:

1. Wake Up!

Don't go with the flow, confront sin and error and remove it from your life. Jesus is calling us from the dead.

Do you remember Lazarus? (Tell the Lazarus story.)

Now, God doesn't leave us on our own to 'wake up.'

John 14:16-17, “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— 17 the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.”

You see, **our abiding in Christ follows the Holy Spirits abiding in us!**

2. Strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die!

You must fan into a flame the embers of the spiritual graces in your life. How you show gratitude for what Jesus has done for you is a great place to start.

3. Remember what you have received and heard!

Return to the truth of God's Word, the message of the gospel, and the teaching of the apostles. You must guard the message you were entrusted with. This was especially important in the early church since they had to pass the message orally from one person to another. They didn't have 15 copies of the Bible in each home.

Romans 10:17, “Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.”

4. Keep the truth of Scripture!

You have to live by God's Word, not just know it.

To many know the truths of Scripture, but it hasn't traveled the 18 inches to the heart. What good will that truth do you if it hasn't become real in your life?

5. Repent!

With remorse and sorrow, we must confess and turn from our sin. If it is an emotionless acknowledgement that one is a sinner has it actually reached the heart?

If these 5 steps are followed it will bring revival for each person who follows them.

Without this personal revival Jesus will come like a thief. What is meant here is basically if you aren't ready there is a time coming when you will no longer be able to make that decision to make Jesus Lord. It will be too late, and your fate will be sealed. Don't miss out on Jesus!

V. Counsel

Revelation 3:5-6, "The one who is victorious will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out the name of that person from the book of life, but will acknowledge that name before my Father and his angels. 6 Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

Jesus points out 2 rewards awaiting the faithful:

The first is that we will be dressed in white. We know from earlier that white represents purity and holiness. But added to this is that during the first century the clothing worn at festivals was white clothing. So, the readers of this letter knew that Jesus was telling them that they would be included in heavens festival.

The second reward is that your name won't be removed from the book of life and catch this, Jesus will confess it before God and the angels.

Matthew 10:32, "Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven."

Jesus keeps His promises!