

Letter to the Church in Sardis

Sermon by Andy Sochor

Text: Revelation 3:1-6

This is the fifth in a series of lessons on the seven churches of Asia addressed in Revelation 2-3. Through John, Jesus sent a letter to each church, which He also shared with the others and with us as well. The letters described challenges they were facing, what they were doing well, what they needed to correct, and more. In studying these seven letters, every church can find encouragement and/or warnings that apply to them. We will notice these are we go through our study.

About the City of Sardis

- Located at the intersection of five roads – to Thyatira, Smyrna, Phrygia, Philadelphia, and Ephesus; this made it an important and prosperous trading center
- In the 6th century BC, it was one of the richest and most powerful cities in the world – still famous during the Roman Empire, though not quite to the degree that it was
- Devastated by an earthquake in 17 AD – rebuilt; in 26 AD, the geographer Strabo called it a “great” city
- Had become known as a place of loose-living and pleasure-seeking

Letter to the Church

- Description of Jesus – has the seven Spirits of God (cf. Revelation 1:4), seven = perfect, refers to the Holy Spirit; seven stars (cf. Revelation 1:20), angels of the seven churches; headship over the churches and their message
- Current circumstances – not facing persecution (like Thyatira); likely because they fit in with the world around them; they had been a faithful, active church, and were known for this
- Commendations – a few in Sardis had not soiled their garments (v. 4); they were worthy to walk with the Lord; unfortunately, it was just a few
- Condemnations – despite their reputation of being “alive,” they were “dead” (v. 1), spiritually; they were asleep (v. 2), unaware of the seriousness of their condition
- Punishment for sin – the Lord was coming like a thief (v. 3); implies judgment
- Reward for faithfulness – clothed in white, name in book of life, confessed before the Father (v. 5); forgiven of sins, received salvation, fellowship with Christ

Main Lesson

- Maintain your reputation – they first had to develop the reputation of being faithful; but they failed to maintain it; their situation was similar to Ephesus (Revelation 2:4-5); the difference was that Ephesus seemed to be more active, Sardis had become stagnant

- This is the lesson for us today – we need to maintain our reputation of faithfulness; we first need to develop this reputation individually (3 John 12) and collectively (1 Thessalonians 1:8-9); we then need to maintain our reputation individually (1 Peter 2:11-12; Matthew 5:33-37) and collectively (v. 1); without functioning as we should, we are essentially dead (James 2:26; cf. Ephesians 4:16); we cannot become complacent or rest upon what we have done in the past (Philippians 3:13-14)

Conclusion

- We are going to be known for something – this will be based upon what we do; in order to have a good reputation (individually or collectively), we must work for it
- Once we are known for something, we cannot coast from then on – continue working, serving, growing