

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

SEPTEMBER 29TH-30TH, 2018 // REVELATION

SARDIS: A DEAD CHURCH (REVELATION 3:1-6) "THE SEVEN SPIRITS OF GOD"

Jesus reminds Sardis that He is "the one who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars." We clarified that the 7 spirits are the HS attributes mentioned in Isaiah 11 and the stars are the churches. The number 7 also represents perfection.

THIS CHURCH RECEIVES NO APPROVAL!

Jesus gets right to the criticism of Sardis because He sees nothing good in them. The main accusation against them is that their reputation is faulty. They fool everyone into thinking they're alive, but they are spiritually dead.

- This was a church full of nominal Christians.

THE ADVICE FROM JESUS

God said to "be alert" and strengthen what little passion they had left. He says their "works are not complete," meaning they aren't done. He commands them to repent.

- Apathy and entitlement may be the greatest enemies of the church!
- We must wake up and realize we have much work to do!

SARDIS WAS NOT BEING PERSECUTED

The church of Smyrna had no criticism in the midst of extreme hardships. But Sardis, where it was convenient and easy to follow Jesus, received no compliment because of their apathy. This demands change.

- God threatens to "come like a thief." This isn't the 2nd coming, but an abrupt stop to their earthly blessings.

LIVING OUR FAITH IN THE DAY-TO-DAY GRIND

The Bible calls us to righteous living. That means our faith is not just on the weekends, but in the everyday life we live.

- Worship is not just singing, it is how we work, treat others, and live our lives in a way that honors God. True faith is not perfect, but always on the clock.

PHILADELPHIA: AN OPEN DOOR (REVELATION 3:7-13) "...ONE WHO HAS THE KEY OF DAVID"

This is a reference to Is. 22:22. It relates to Jesus telling the church in Philadelphia that they serve the God who opens and shuts doors.

- This congregation was small, so it had little strength to oppose evil. Yet they kept close to Christ, and through Him, any obstacle can be overcome.

THE APPROVAL OF THE PHILADELPHIA CHURCH

Jesus assures them that He's placed a "door that no one can close" in front of them because of their faithfulness to the Word and His name in the midst of persecution.

- Some believe this is good works that they will do, but it is probably referring to their salvation and the door of heaven.

THE "SYNAGOGUE OF SATAN"...AGAIN

Once again we see that the members of the Jewish synagogue were causing serious trouble for the local Christians.

- Similar to Smyrna, there is no accusation against this church, yet they still suffer heavy persecution. We are reminded again that allegiance to Christ isn't an escape from hard times.

THE ASSURANCE AND APPEAL TO PHILADELPHIA

Because of their endurance, Jesus promises they will have "an open door no one can shut," that the Jews would "bow down at your feet," and that He would keep them from the "hour of testing."

- The "door" refers to salvation. Bowing "down at your feet" probably refers to Phil. 2:10-11: "every knee will bow..."

KEEPING THEM FROM THE "HOUR OF TESTING"

This is the first reference about the "Great Tribulation" that will be initiated by God. Jesus promises this church that they will not suffer through this awful time.

- This is where people begin to disagree. Does this passage mean a "rapture," or is Jesus saying He will protect them from His wrath?

WE CAN AGREE TO DISAGREE (I HOPE)

In John 17:15, Jesus said, "I am not praying that you take them out of the world, but that you protect them from the evil one." One perspective of Rev. 3:10 is that Christians will go through the Great Tribulation but not suffer God's wrath that comes immediately after. This is post-tribulation/pre-wrath theory.

"HOLD ON WHAT YOU HAVE TO"

If the Philadelphia church will stay strong, no one will be able to "take their crown." Also, God will make a pillar for them in heaven. This symbolizes security and permanency with God forever. We get a little glimpse of eternity as Jesus mentions a new city descending down for us.

LAODICEA: SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS (REVELATION 3:14-22) "...THE FAITHFUL AND TRUE WITNESS"

The church at Laodicea was reminded that Jesus is the "true witness," because there was a problem with this church being trustworthy.

- One of the most famous and misunderstood passages in Revelation is about the Laodicean church not being "cold nor hot," but "lukewarm."

STRAIGHT TO THE ACCUSATION

There is no compliment to Laodicea, only criticism about not being hot or cold, but lukewarm. The temperature is not referring to the state of their faith (on fire or ice cold spiritually), but to the location of this church.

- Laodicea fell between a medicinal hot spring in Hierapolis and Colossae that had cold pure springs.

THINK COFFEE

Coffee is great either hot or ice cold, but when it becomes room temp it is disgusting and we spit it out. The reference Jesus is making to temperature is about different ways to minister. Being "lukewarm" implied just doing nothing. There is no neutral with Jesus. We're either progressing or digressing.

THIS MAKES JESUS VOMIT

God uses graphic imagery to describe how He feels about apathetic Christians. The source of the apathy was self-righteousness. The Laodiceans said "I'm rich, I have become wealthy and need nothing." Jesus rebutted with, "you don't realize you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked."

DON'T MISS THE POINT

The point is not money, but humility. We're so quick to point the finger at others, but the fact is all of us can slide into self-righteousness and self-sufficiency.

- We've been sold a lie that we're perfect just the way we are and to follow our hearts. There is nothing good in us apart from God!

BUY THINGS YOU DON'T THINK YOU NEED

The advice for the Laodiceans was to buy "gold refined in the fire." Unlike the material things they had put their love into, Jesus tells them to invest into the real thing that withstands the heat of life. He also says to cover their "shameful nakedness," meaning to stop doing unrighteous acts.

A CENTER FOR FAMOUS EYE OINTMENT

Laodicea was globally known for an eye salve that was made in the city. Ironically, a city that was known for eye health had Christians that couldn't see spiritually.

- Jesus recommended they use another ointment, the Holy Spirit, to help their spiritual eyes.

THE MOST UNDERSERVING GET THE kinDEST FEELINGS

This is something we need to hear! Jesus strongly rebukes this church, but He clarifies His actions by saying, "As many as I love, I rebuke and discipline."

- We often mistake discipline and correction for punishment. A good father disciplines his children because he knows what is best!

"BE ZEALOUS AND REPENT!"

Jesus simply advises that they turn away from their self-righteousness and apathy. He also says that He "stands at the door and knocks," giving us ample opportunity to answer the door and let Him in and "eat" with us.

- If we will humble ourselves and rely on Him for what we truly need, we will "sit with God on His throne."

WHERE THE RUBBER MEETS THE ROAD

- Are we honest people?
- Is what you see, what you get?
- Have Christians become the most skilled mask wearers?
- Are we Christian in name only?
- What are we doing to change that?
- Do our actions speak louder than our labels?

WARM, COMFORTABLE, AND DISTRACTED

- Our biggest obstacles will be the very things that bring us "comfort" and distract us from being what we can be if we were focused on Him.
- Humility and an understanding that we must be dependent on something greater than us is the linchpin to it all.