

# THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

AUGUST 10TH–11TH, 2024 // REVELATION

## SARDIS: A DEAD CHURCH (REVELATION 3:1–6) "THE ONE WHO HAS THE SEVEN SPIRITS OF GOD"

Jesus reminds Sardis that He is "the one who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars." The "seven spirits" are possibly the Holy Spirit's attributes mentioned in Isaiah 11 and the stars are the churches.

- The number 7 will represent perfection and completion throughout Revelation.

### WAIT, IS JESUS GOD?

Two times in this chapter, Jesus refers to "my God." This opens up the conversation of the **Trinity: Father, Son, and Spirit**. The mystery of the Trinity is there is 1 God manifested in 3 co-equal persons who have unique roles.

- **Finite creations are incapable of completely understanding an infinite God.**

### THIS CHURCH GETS NO APPROVAL!

Jesus gets right to the criticism because He sees nothing good in Sardis. The main accusation 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 (by name only) "Christians."

### SOME STRONG ADVICE

Jesus said to "be alert and strengthen" what little passion they had left. He says their **works are not "complete,"** or not done. Jesus also commands them to **repent.**

- **Faith is more than accepting Who Jesus is. It is putting knowledge into action and living according to the Word.**

### SARDIS WAS NOT EVEN BEING PERSECUTED!

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.

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

### CONSISTENT FAITH

The Bible calls us to righteous living. That means our **faith is not sporadic, but present and active in our day-to-day lives.**

- **Worship is more than 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.**

### A FEW GOOD ONES STILL REMAINED

Even in an entitled and apathetic culture, some true Believers remained. Jesus assures them that if they "conquer" evil and apathy their name will never be "erase[d]...from the book of life."

- **Endurance is part of true Christianity. If we depend on Him, we will endure.**

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

This is a reference to Isaiah 22:22. It relates to Jesus telling the church in Philadelphia 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, they were able to endure all obstacles.**

### THE APPROVAL OF PHILADELPHIA

Jesus assures them that He has 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 severe persecution.

- This could mean good works God will empower them to do, but it seems later to mean their salvation and heaven.

### THE "SYNAGOGUE OF SATAN" AGAIN

Once again, we see members of the Jewish synagogue were causing serious trouble for the local Christians. Similar to Smyrna, there is **no accusation against them, yet they still suffer persecution.**

- **We're reminded that allegiance to Christ isn't an escape from earthly hardships.**

### THE ASSURANCE TO PHILADELPHIA

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

- The "door" refers to salvation. "Bow down at your feet" probably refers to Philippians 2:10–11.

### KEEPING THEM FROM THE "HOUR OF TESTING"

This is the first reference in Revelation to 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 mean a "rapture," or is Jesus saying He will protect them from His wrath?

### WE CAN AGREE TO DISAGREE (I HOPE)

Jesus said in John 17:15, "I am not praying that you (God) take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one."

- One perspective of Revelation 3:10 is Christians go through the Tribulation but don't suffer God's wrath that comes immediately after. This is **post-tribulation/pre-wrath theory.**

### "HOLD ON TO WHAT YOU HAVE"

If Philadelphia 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 also get a little glimpse of eternity as Jesus mentions a new city descending down for us.

## LAODICEA: SELF-RIGHTEOUS (REVELATION 3:14–22) "THE FAITHFUL AND TRUE WITNESS"

Laodicea was reminded that Jesus is the "true witness," because there was a problem with their reputation. Jesus also says He is the "originator," meaning the agent of all creation.

- One of the most 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 being lukewarm. The temperature isn't just referring to the state of their faith (on fire or ice cold), but also to their location.

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

### THINK COFFEE

Coffee is great either hot or ice cold, but at room temp it's 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 are either progressing or regressing (Matthew 12:30).**

### THIS MAKES JESUS SICK?

Jesus uses graphic imagery to describe how He feels about spiritual apathy. The source of their apathy was **self-righteousness.** The Laodiceans said, "I'm rich; I have become wealthy and need nothing."

- Jesus responded, "You don't realize...you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked."

### A POINT FOR ALL OF US TO CONSIDER

The point is humility. We're so quick to point at others, but **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, but there is nothing good in us apart from God (James 1:17; Romans 7:18–19)!**

### "OINTMENT TO SPREAD ON YOUR EYES"

Laodicea was globally known for an eye salve. Ironically, a city known for eye health had Christians who struggled to spiritually see.

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

### THE REASON GOD GETS ON TO US

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 for them!**

### "BE ZEALOUS AND REPENT"

Jesus zealously advises that they turn away from self-righteousness and apathy. He also "stand[s] at the door and knock[s]," giving ample opportunity to let Him in to "eat" with us.

- **If we will be humble and build a relationship with Jesus, we will become passionate for the things of God.**

### "THE RIGHT TO SIT WITH ME ON MY THRONE"

Jesus promises those who passionately pursue Him that they will get to "sit with me on my throne," meaning inherit heaven.

- Romans 8:17 says true Christians are "co-heirs with Christ" and in Revelation 21, Jesus tells us about our inheritance. **God loves us so much He wants to share His Kingdom with us.**

### DEAD (SARDIS)

- Spiritual "life" must be defined by the Word, not modern culture's definition of Christian.
- Also, **a claim of identity must be supported by evidence.** If we claim Christianity, we must believe in Jesus' identity and God's Word and display the Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5) that comes through obedience to God (Matthew 7; 12).

### DYING (LAODICEA)

- There are many ways we can grow in our love of God and others, but choosing to do nothing will never move us forward.
- **Christians are not called to sit still.** We are called to evolve more and more into the image of our Creator. **This means we grow in love, knowledge, and action.**

### ALIVE (PHILADELPHIA)

- Life is only possible by nourishment, a healthy environment, and reproduction.
- Philly possessed "life" and had "open doors" in this life and the next because they endured in their relationship with Jesus. Their **endurance came from consumption of the Word, community, and discipleship.**

### INTENTIONAL

- **The key to "life" is intentional sacrifice and growth.** We must be humble, seek truth and knowledge, be obedient to God, live repentant, and put our faith into action.
- **We are too valuable to live accidentally.** We must prioritize this life in such a manner that it positively shapes our eternity.