

Revelation 3:1-6 –Living, but Dead in Sardis

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: The church at Sardis was 1 of 2 churches that **faced no outside persecution**. And yet, unlike all the other churches so far, **Christ had virtually no commendation for this church**.

What was so wrong about the church in Sardis? The answer is shocking. There was no persecution but **hypocrisy dominated this church**. The Lord therefore had to warn them to change their ways so they could receive his comfort and rewards.

Our headings are:

The **Concerns**

The **Challenges**

The **Comforts**.

Our goals are: That you will **learn to guard yourself against the tendency to go through the ritual motions of good works and worship, but not really loving the Lord as you should**.

Concerns

1 "And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, 'These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: "I know your works, **that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead**."

1. Sardis was a city in Asia Minor.

Sardis was considered the capital city of Asia Minor. **It was the seat of the licentious worship of the goddess Cybele**. Cybele was particularly concerned with fertility of her worshippers.

2. In this letter to the church in Sardis Jesus described himself a little differently, saying that he had the 7 Spirits of God)

Why does he describe himself this way? Because the **Holy Spirit (represented by 7 Spirits) knew the hearts** of the people of this church. This is the key. And having 7 Spirits meant he knew everything; he knew every pretensive heart!

3. So what concerns did Jesus have for his church in Sardis – and it was still his church in spite of their sins?

The Sardians had a reputation (name) as a spiritually alive and active congregation of Jesus, but it was an untrue name; they were actually acting like spiritually dead people. Eph 2:1-7.

They no doubt had youth meetings and fellowship meals, but they were like dead.

They worshipped; they had the Lord's Supper.

They gave to the poor.

They prayed privately and publicly

They talked like Christians.

They kept the Sabbath, but there was no love in their souls.

"There was the shell, but not the kernel; a body, but not the soul." Henry.

Of course, being "dead" does not mean they were really totally dead, but it shows they were hypocrites. **They were dead in faithful obedience**. **They were weak spiritually**. They had a **form of godliness**, but did not have the power of God. 2Tim 3:5.

James 2:17 Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

4. There was no evidence this church was persecuted, yet it totally compromised with society and the prevailing culture.

This apparently active church was stagnant...**But we can better say the church as secularized...**

The lure of the fat overweight goddess was very strong for most!

5. Lessons:

a. We too live in a society where many believers desperately want to fit in with the world. The church has become "secularized" – trying to be like the world. We want our church **and** our fat overweight goddesses also. We obsess about wealth. We want to dress like the world...we watch the same movies...we view marriage like a business...we raise children the same... That hypocrisy undermines our ability to be effective for Jesus. There is no time for evangelism. **We are afraid to invite others to church because we think they might be offended and we would lose a friend**.

b. Christ sees that hypocrisy. Your heart is laid open before him. He has the 7 Spirits in him!

Challenges

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

1. Jesus challenged the Sardians to "wake up" – be watchful against the danger that could directly or indirectly destroy them.

Sardis was built on a mountain in a virtually impregnable position, but twice in their history they were completely and speedily overrun. This seems to be the picture from which Jesus is drawing. A seemingly lively city was quickly captured and destroyed – twice. (This is another reason we know the 7 churches were not 7 eras, but 7 real churches.) So there was imminent danger!

Ephesians 5:14 Therefore He says: "Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light."

2. Jesus challenged the Sardians to "strengthen themselves."

They had to increase their faith so they would be more sincere in following the Lord. That had to **become intolerant** of false teaching. They had to be passionate about truth in their hearts. **They needed fresh love for the Savior.**

No wonder Satan left them alone and did not bring persecution on them. Satan had them where he wanted.

So the Lord commanded them to strengthen themselves with the **exercise of internal obedience and love for Jesus.**

3 "Remember therefore **how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent.** Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.

3. Jesus challenged the Sardians to "remember what they had received and heard," as this would strengthen their faith!

The word "received" here has a special fuller meaning according to Greek scholars. "Received" means "getting a permanent deposit." This means the Sardians were properly taught and believed in Christ...but were pushing it aside.

Colossians 2:6 **As you have therefore received** Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,

So if they were not watchful, or strengthen themselves, or remember what Jesus did for them, he would come and destroy them...suddenly...as a thief in the night...

4. This "coming of the Lord" did not mean 2000 years later, but a coming in judgment on this Sardian church.

If this were referring to the 2nd coming of Jesus he would have said: "...when I will judge the whole world." Instead Jesus said: "...I will come upon you." You can see the same idea in the judgment threatened on Israel in Leviticus 26, and Deuteronomy 28.

5. Lessons:

a. Old proverb: The feet of an avenging God are covered with wool.

b. Constantly feed your soul with faithful teaching and meditate on the Word or you are likely to become a hypocrite and be drawn away in sin. You will cheat on your Savior if you aren't filling yourself with his love. Read his love letter daily!

Comforts

4 "You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and **they shall walk with Me in white,** for they are worthy. 5 "He who overcomes shall be **clothed in white garments,** and **I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life;** but I will **confess his name before My Father** and before His angels. 6 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.""

1. Jesus comforted the Sardians who had not muddied their clothes (a kind of commendation – but limited – as only a few kept themselves clean) saying he would walk with them.

What does Jesus mean "walk with me?" "Walk" means "live." The godly Sardians would live **like Christians in a non-Christian world and even while they were surrounded by pretending Christians.**

2. Jesus then said after the Sardians suffering were done on the earth, they would walk with white clothes of righteousness in heaven.

Of course, their clothes were clean because Jesus made their clothes clean and kept them clean.

Ezekiel 16:10 "I clothed you in embroidered cloth and gave you sandals of badger skin; I clothed you with fine linen and covered you with silk.

Ezekiel 16:14 "Your fame went out among the nations because of your beauty, for it was complete through **My splendor which I had bestowed on you,**" says the Lord GOD.

White clothes signify the covering of Christ perfect righteousness – justification. In heaven all Christians will enjoy the fullness of their justification...freed from guilt and sin. **We do similar things:** special robes for a judge, kings, at graduations, or in certain sports when one wins a tournament, as in golf.

3. Jesus said he would reward the Sardians with their names being kept in the Book of Life.

A few Sardians chose to live as a kernel and not the shell and would be permanently rewarded for it.

The Book of Life is the roll or register of those who have become heirs of immortality.

Luke 12:8 "Also I say to you, whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God.

But will Jesus really blot people's names out of his book? Can someone lose his salvation? No, you can't lose your salvation. But there are some who thought their names were in the Book of Life but were not. The just believed it. So it would have *seemed* like their names could be removed.

4. Jesus said he would acknowledge the Sardians as faithful before the Father.

The ultimate Judge will declare them innocent!

5. Lessons:

a. Living a pure life will not make you popular. You won't be invited to the "right" parties and social gatherings. You might not get the promotion at work. You might not get the "perfect" looking husband or wife. But there are things that are more important: Having your name written in the Lamb's Book of Life and to be given a white robe in the marriage supper of the Lamb of God! Chose the gift of value!

b. While you live on this earth, you know you will always have the company of Jesus...the one who teaches you...and comforts you...and helps you... He has his Holy Spirit pray for you and correct you!

Conclusion:

Any church search at the time of the Revelation would have been attracted to the church at Sardis. The church was full of activity and looked alive. **But the Heart-searcher, Jehovah God, was concerned** because they were only a few faithful. Most were spiritually dead people there. The Heart-searcher therefore **challenged the spiritually dead to wake up**, and get back to faithful obedience. He **threatened those in a spiritually dead state** that their names would be removed from the Book of Life. And **he comforted those who had remained faithful**, telling them they would be covered with the righteousness of Jesus Christ in heaven. This lesson did not go in vain. Eusebius, an early church father, wrote about the continued existence and faithfulness of this church decades later. Eusebius: (260-341A.D), Caesarea) (Ecclesiastical History)

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. Personally, is your hypocrisy showing? Do you show up here for worship Sunday after Sunday but only because of what people might say about you if you miss worship? Do you have the right religious talk –telling others you are a Christian, but your life is falling short of being a credible witness for Jesus? Do you say you are raising your children right but never teach them the Bible or how to pray at home? Do you talk about helping the poor but never lift a finger or write a check to help them? Do you say you believe in the sovereignty of God but complain or live in fear? Then your hypocrisy is showing!

2. If you are living as hypocrite, Jesus will not indulge you forever, so wake up, and be sincere. Yes, it is hard to always be passionate and sincere, but you are not to try to obey God in your own strength. You have to ask him for help. You are to refresh you heart daily with God's Word of Love. Talk to a growing member, talk to your elder or pastor. Do what it takes to live and grow in love and passion!

3. From the church's perspective, don't just say we are Christians, show it! Don't say, "We are a wonderful church," and refuse to discipline...or preach from the whole Bible...or evangelize the lost...

4. If you are doing well, keep faithful. In due time you will receive your reward.

Finally, if you are not a Christian, then your name is not in the Lamb's Book of Life. You have no hope of getting any kind help from God. Your name is in the Book of Condemnation and you will testify against yourself. Only Christ can fix that record if you call him for help. He will take your sins and give you a clean record.