

The Message to Sardis

Revelation 3:1-6

August 21, 2022

I. Introduction and Review

- A. Balaam and Jezebel want both-and not either-or. Both the favor of man and God.
- B. Is Jezebel a believer? Does the term “my bond servants” (2:18) describe believers?
- C. Does “I will kill her children” speak of a premature death of believers?
 - 1. See I John 5:16, 17; James 5:19, 20; I Corinthians 11:27-30
- D. Sardis is the smallest city and the shortest letter.

II. The Church at Sardis

- A. The city – v. 1a
 - 1. 30 miles southeast of Thyatira



- 2. 500 years earlier, it was one of the wealthiest cities in the world
- 3. Famous for jewelry, dye and textiles, and the first city to mint gold and silver coinage
- 4. A very pagan city – worshippers of the goddess Cybele – a temple of Artemis located there
- 5. Ruins of a church building have been found next to the temple of Artemis
- 6. Population of 60,000-100,000 in 96 A.D.
- 7. The largest congregation of the seven
- B. The Christ – v. 1b
 - 1. “He who has the seven spirits of God...”. this speaks of His wisdom.
 - a. See Revelation 1:4; Isaiah 11:2
 - 2. “...and the seven stars...”

- a. See 1:20. This speaks of His authority over the church.
- C. The Condemnation – vs. 1c-2
 - 1. Their lifeless profession – v. 1c
 - a. The organism had become a mere organization
 - b. Their doors were open but shut by God
 - c. “dead” = unholy.
 - i. Luke 15:24
 - d. Spiritually alive but dead-unfruitful.
 - i. See II Per. 1:8; Heb 6:7,8; Rom. 4:19
 - e. Johnson page 97
 - 2. Their uncompleted works – v. 2
 - a. Not wrong deeds, but shallow and incomplete
 - b. “The membership not the members were growing.” V.H.
 - c. Half-hearted; superficial; content with mediocrity
- D. The Correction and Warning – v. 3
 - 1. “Wake up”; be or keep on being watchful.
 - a. See Matthew 25:1-13
 - 2. “Strengthen the things that remain.”
 - a. Keep the good stuff; get rid of the rest!
 - 3. “Remember what you have received.”
 - a. See II Peter 1:9
 - 4. “Keep it”.
 - a. Keep on keeping it; they lacked consistency.
- E. The commendation and comfort – vs. 4, 5
 - 1. There is little or no commendation
 - 2. But for a few faithful, the church had failed.
 - 3. The faithful will be clothed by the Lord.
 - a. Philippians 8:9; Revelation 19:7-10 cf. v. 8
 - 4. A strong promise to never be removed from the Book of Life. This is not a threat, but rather another example of a litotes.
 - 5. “litotes”
 - a. “Understatement in which an affirmative is expressed by the negative of the contrary.” (as in “not a bad singer.”)

- b. The point is to focus on the positive idea to which the negative refers. Examples:
 - i. Acts 20:12 – “Not a little comforted.” i.e., very comforted.
 - ii. Romans 1:16 – “I am not ashamed of the gospel.” i.e, very proud of it.
- 6. “Some have considered the book of life not as the roll of those who are saved but rather a list of those for whom Christ died, that is, all humanity who have possessed physical life. As they come to maturity and are faced with the responsibility of accepting or rejecting Christ, their names are blotted out if they fail to receive Jesus Christ as Savior; whereas those who do accept Christ as Savior are confirmed in their position in the book of life, and their names are confessed before the Father and the heavenly angels.”
– John F. Walvoord
- 7. Please note that “*the book of life*” in Revelation 20:12 becomes the “*Lamb’s book of life*” in 21:27 after the Great White Throne Judgement
- F. The Challenge – v. 6
 - 1. Hear and do!

III. Application

- A. Prophetic
 - 1. Sardis has been called the Reformation or dead church (1520-1750 A.D.)
 - 2. The reformation saw a return to some of the basic doctrines. The church as a whole reformed but not revived.
 - 3. Elaborate rituals and human tradition prevailed.
- B. Personal
 - 1. Sardis and Laodicea were the worst churches
 - 2. How much blame and how much credit should go to the leadership of a church?