

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Let's turn our bibles to Revelation 3

Last week, we started to look at the messages that Jesus Christ gave John to give to the leaders of the seven churches in Asia.

And in chapter two, we had Ephesus, and the message that Jesus had for them was that they were doing pretty good – bunch of church programs – but they lost sight of why they were doing – they lost their first love – they forgot about Jesus.

Smyrna was the poor and persecuted church – the message that Jesus gave them was – I know your persecuted, I know you may think that your dirt poor – but in reality you are rich. Don't quit –

Pergamos was the compromising church – Jesus tells them that despite persecution and being in an area infested with idolatry – He sees their faithfulness but they have started to compromise – so they needed to correct that.

The last one we looked at was Thyatira – there were doing works, they were doing it in love – but their correction had to do with allowing a false teacher to lead some of the people astray.

So tonight, we are going to look at the last three churches –

Sardis

Philadelphia

Laodicea

And once again, these messages although they were addressed to these seven churches – are also a warning to the churches today and to every believer – that we examine ourselves to see which one of these churches we most identify with.

Let's pray...

[Rev 3:1-22 NKJV] 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.

Once again, the letter is addressed to the angel of the church in Sardis and I told you last week and the week before that – that the angel here is the overseer of the church (pastor).

This message is addressed to the church through this individual.

And to the church in Sardis, Jesus addresses Himself as He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars.

The seven Spirits, as I mentioned in our study back in chapter one – speaks of the seven-fold work of the Holy Spirit.

You might remember that I mentioned that the number seven is a symbol of completeness in the bible – it doesn't mean that there are seven individual Spirits –

And we even looked at Isaiah 11:2

[Isa 11:2 NKJV] 2 The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.

And the reason that Jesus uses this title – as we will see is because Sardis is the “dead church” and the reason that they are the dead church is because the people didn't allow the work of the Holy Spirit in their ministry and their lives.

I asked you to make a note where it states **that you have a name** –

The church in Sardis had a reputation –

That means when people looked at the church – it appeared to be a vibrant church.

But in reality – they were spiritually dead.

This is the church of the dead hypocrites.

They look like Christians, but for the most part they are not.

Notice that Jesus has nothing good to say about this church.

Why because they are dead –

There is no fight in them – the battle had been lost.

Notice they were not even experiencing any persecution – why?

Because they were dead. They were no threat to satan and his minions.

Too often at church we are concerned about “looking good” instead of “being good”.

I spoke about this on Sunday – my analogy about our church clothes.

The hypocrite is only concerned with outward appearance.

God is concerned about what is going on inside our lives, which is reflected by the kinds of things that we do for others. (our works)

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

The phrase “Be watchful” is the phrase to wake up from a deep sleep.

For those that are asleep – Jesus is saying, “wake up!!!”

But not everyone in the church is “dead” some were close to dying and Jesus wants them to wake up as well.

Jesus hasn't given up on them.

Interestingly, in its history, the city of Sardis was easily conquered twice before.

Despite being surrounded by huge walls.

It wasn't that the attacking armies that overwhelmed Sardis, it was their overconfidence that made them stop being watchful.

Both times they were conquered, the attacking army found their soldiers on top of the wall – asleep -

Therefore the spiritual state of the church in Sardis was a reflection of the city's historical character.

Your works **perfect** before God – the word that is used for perfect – is the word to make full –

The word paints a picture of filling up something, like a pitcher of lemonade.

Their works haven't reached the standard that God wanted for them.

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.

Notice that Jesus doesn't say what you received and heard – He says how you have received. He emphasizes that they examine themselves by how they responded to the gospel.

Have you accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?

If so, has the Holy Spirit changed you?

Does the Holy Spirit continue to change you?

Because if we call ourselves believers, then the Holy Spirit should be at work in our lives.

Paul says this in the book of Galatians -

(Ga 5:22–23 NKJV) —22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control.

Being a Christian involves a work of God in our lives, not just joining a club or being a nice person.

It involves the Holy Spirit working in our lives.

So Jesus' warning to the church is, if you don't wake up, if you don't correct your ways, judgment awaits.

[Mat 24:45-51 NKJV] 45 "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? 46 "Blessed [is] that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. 47 "Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods. 48 "But if that evil servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' 49 "and begins to beat [his] fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, 50 "the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for [him] and at an hour that he is not aware of, 51 "and will cut him in two and appoint

[him] his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

For those in the church in Sardis who don't change their ways, they will be like the evil servant in the parable.

The wise servants will be the ones that knew He was coming and were obedient to His will.

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."**

So those that are not dead in Sardis and those that overcome – those that repent and change their ways, they are going to be able to walk with Jesus and be dressed in His righteousness.

Their names will not be blotted out from the Book of Life.

If our names are in the Book of Life – we are assured our citizenship in heaven.

Now, the question becomes – can someone lose their salvation???

The bible does mention apostasy –

Charles Templeton was an acquaintance of Billy Graham.

Many people felt that he was a better preacher than Billy Graham.

Charles Templeton walked away from the Lord and actually became the poster boy for the Atheist.

He made it his mission to rescue the people he once brought to Jesus.

He wrote numerous books telling the world that Christianity was fake – that there was no such thing as God.

Did Charles Templeton walk away from salvation or was he even saved in the first place???

' 7 "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, 'These things says **He who is holy, He who is true, "He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens":**

Jesus reminds the church that He is holy and true.

First of all, this shows that Jesus is Yahweh as He alone is holy.

And the word here used for true – is “not hidden”

Jesus is true in all of who He is.

Turn with me to Isaiah 22 – we are going to look at the bible reference regarding the key of David.

One of Hezekiah's leaders, Shebna, would be disgraced and brought down because of his pride.

The other, Eliakim, would take Shebna's place and be given great authority.

[Isa 22:20-23 NKJV] 20 'Then it shall be in that day, That I will call My servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah; 21 I will clothe him with your robe And strengthen him with your belt; I will commit your responsibility into his hand. He shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem And to the house of Judah. 22 The key of the house of David I will lay on his shoulder; So he shall open, and no one shall shut; And he shall shut, and no one shall open. 23 I will fasten him [as] a peg in a secure place, And he will become a glorious throne to his father's house.

The “house of David” refers to the king of Judah (descended from King David).

Eliakim would have all the authority of the king.

He would have the ability to make things happen – to open and shut whatever he wanted.

In Revelation, Jesus is the one with this “key”.

Jesus Himself is a descendant of David and is reminding the church that He has the authority of the king of Israel.

He is the king of Israel.

He is the king of the universe.

He is the one who has the keys to open and shut, to make things happen.

8 "I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name.

There is no rebuke of the Church in Philadelphia – Jesus knows that they have been faithful.

The open door here means that Jesus opens doors – meaning He alone opens up opportunities to share the gospel and it is up to the church to walk through the doors in faith.

The church in Philadelphia was an evangelizing church – they took advantage of the doors that Jesus opened for them.

This doesn't mean that the opportunity is going to be easy – it may be difficult, but at least it is open.

I asked you to make a note of little strength –

This is a reference to the size of the church in Philadelphia.

We can fool ourselves into thinking that God only uses BIG churches or FAMOUS pastors. We are wrong if we think that.

The secret about Philadelphia was not their strength, but their faithfulness.

God's desire is only that we be faithful.

It only takes a "little" strength – He does the rest.

9 "Indeed I will make [those] of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie--indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.

This is in reference to nonbelievers coming to know Christ and worshipping God in the presence of believers – they are not worshipping Christians – they are worshipping God.

10 "Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.

This "hour" is a reference to the time we call "The Tribulation", which is detailed out starting in Revelation 6.

Some have suggested that this is a promise for God to protect the faithful church “through” the Tribulation, as if the church will go through the Tribulation.

The problem is that the language does not bear it out.

Jesus promises to keep us “from”, or “out of”, or “away from” the Tribulation.

I believe this is a clear promise that the faithful church will be snatched away in the Rapture, and it will take place before the Tribulation starts.

11 "Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.

Jesus tells them to continue to be faithful until He returns and continue to do what they were doing.

Continue to evangelize, continue to trust God and continue to be faithful.

12 "He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And [I will write on him] My new name. 13 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." "

Philadelphia was known for architecture and for its earthquakes.

And lot of times, after an earthquake, the only thing that was left standing were the pillars of the buildings.

The city would lay in ruin.

The reward for overcomers is this: as a “pillar” in God’s temple, our faithfulness allows us to withstand the earthquakes, the things that shake and ruin other people.

And Jesus will also write His name on us.

So that everyone will know who we belong to.

14 "And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God:

Laodicea was a prosperous city – in fact in 60 AD, the city was destroyed by a powerful earthquake and they refused help from Rome and rebuilt with their own money.

Jesus uses that title Faithful and True Witness – this is going to be the exact opposite of the character of the church of Laodicea.

15 "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. 16 "So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.

What Jesus found the church in Laodicea guilty of being lukewarm.

They wanted to play the middle.

They wanted to appease God and appease the world at the same time.

And because they were neither hot or cold – they were useless.

Now, if being hot means that one would have a loving relationship with the Lord – why would Jesus wish that they would be cold???

We understand the hot – but why the cold?

Because when someone is cold – Jesus can work in them and they will see their coldness and realize that they need warmth.

A perfect example was the thief on the cross – He was cold toward Jesus and clearly saw his need.

A perfect example of someone who is lukewarm was Judas - following Jesus enough to be considered a disciple, yet not giving his heart over to Jesus in fullness.

17 "Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'--and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—

The church in Laodicea was spiritually poor - the problem was that they were blind to it.

Look at the difference in the way the church viewed itself and how Jesus looked upon them.

Church said they were rich and didn't need anything

Jesus said they were poor and naked

18 "I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, [that] the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.

Here we have what Jesus wants the church in Laodicea to do –

They need three things that only Jesus provides.

Gold refined in the fire – speaks of faith from difficulty -

God doesn't want us to have a shallow faith, but faith that has been refined and strengthened in difficult times.

God is looking for people who will trust Him during the storms of life.

White garments – Good works

[Rev 19:8 NKJV] 8 And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

Laodicea was known for expensive black wool – Jesus tells them that instead of black wool – they should adorn themselves with good works.

Not good works to impress others but to impress Jesus.

The last item – **eye salve**

Godly wisdom – change the way we think –

19 "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.

Jesus wants to make sure that the church knows that despite His rebuke – He still loves them. In fact, the rebuke is a response to the affection that Jesus had for the church.

He wants them to repent.

20 "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone **hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.**

This verse applies to nonbelievers as well as believers.

Jesus gave this lukewarm church The Great Invitation. He knocked at their door, asking entry to come and dine with them, in the sense of sharing warm, intimate time. It only happens as we respond to His knock, but the promise is made to all: If anyone hears my voice.

The key to opening the door is to first hear His voice. When we give attention to what Jesus says, then we can be rescued from our own lukewarmness and enter into a “zealous” relationship with Him.

21 "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. 22 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." ' "

Those who overcome the battle against indifference, compromise, and self-reliance, receive a special reward. They enjoy a place with the enthroned Jesus

This is the worst of the seven Churches, and yet the most prominent of all the promises are made to it, showing that the worst may repent, finally conquer, and attain even to the highest state of glory.

Amen

Let's pray....

CALVARY
Santa Cruz