

Spiritual Maturity

The Church in Sardis: The Dead Church

- Sardis was one of the oldest and best defended cities in the region and the wealthy capitol of the ancient Kingdom of Lydia.
- Somewhere around 1,200 B.C. Croesus became the King!
- Like most cities, the Romans conquered it and Sardis because a bustling city of trade with wool and textiles at its center.
- There are actually no clues about its founders or leaders.
- The assumption is that the Church in Sardis was planted during the time of Paul's three years in Ephesus.
- It is believed that the Church in Sardis declined into social gatherings instead of a gathering of those who were walking out their redemption and new life in Christ. Just a few moral people doing some good works!
- This is a sad and tragic letter to a rather sad and tragic Church because this Church is dead!
- By definition, the Church is a place where God's presence is. Where The Holy Spirit is alive, and The Son is Lord and where Christians are alive!
- This was not so in Sardis! Unlike all other letters, Jesus has little to commend. At best He says, "...not all of you are dead!"
- Remember, these are real people, living real life at a real time!

Revelation 3:1-6 (NIV)

1 "To the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. 2 Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have found your deeds unfinished in the sight of my God. 3 Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; hold it fast, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you. 4 Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy. 5 The one who is victorious will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out the name of that person from the book of life but will acknowledge that name before my Father and his angels. 6 Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches

I. The first thing Jesus does is remind them of *WHO HE IS!!!!!!!*

A. THE "Seven Spirits of God" are a reference to Jesus being...

1. The complete and perfect Spirit of God!
2. Notice what Jesus said at the beginning of John's revelation:

Revelation 1:20 (NIV)

20 The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels (the messengers, pastors, preachers, overseers, etc.) of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

3. Jesus is saying, "I am the Head and Lord of the Church, not leaders, overseers, elders or preachers!"
4. "I hold them in My hand, not the other way around!"

B. This seems to be a reference to Isaiah when the "prophetic word" was given about Jesus!

Isaiah 11:1-3 (NIV)

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;
 from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.
 The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—
 the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
 the Spirit of counsel and of might,
 the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord—
 and he will delight in the fear of the Lord.

C. Remember, scripture says all the fulness of God dwelt in Jesus!

Colossians 2:9 (NIV)

9 For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.

1. Jesus establishes His authority and rule! He is Lord, Savior and God over all!!!
2. The question is: Do we live as if this is true? Because it is!
3. The general feel of this letter is one of firmness, disappointment, and warning for the Church in Sardis: The Dead Church.

II. Jesus' comments begin with the revelation of their own deception!!

A. He says in verse one, "You have a reputation of being alive, but you are actually dead!"

1. Again, remember that He has already established His authority and standard!
2. Your opinion really doesn't matter...if He says you are dead, then you are dead!!! He is the complete and fulness of God!
3. They had a social reputation of wonderful ministries, of hospitality and open and accepting gatherings...but were dead!

B. Jesus' specific words were, "I have found your deeds unfinished!"

1. Much like Ephesus, they were doing "the work of the Lord" but had neglected the "Lord of the work!"
2. Is this not liken to what Jesus revealed in the Martha and Mary story?

Luke 10:42 (NIV)

42 Few things are needed - or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

3. For the analytical person: Yes, we are "saved unto good works!"
 (Ephesians 2:10)

B. The analogy Jesus uses for their deadness is in verse 4.

Revelation 3:4 (NIV)

4 Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy.

1. We see The Lord use this analogy over and over throughout scripture.

James 1:26-27 (NIV)

26 Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless. 27 Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

Philippians 2:15 (NIV)

15 That you may become blameless and pure, “children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.” Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky.

Ephesians 5:26-27 (NIV)

26 to make her (the Church) holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

2. Now for a little science...

3. The closest star to us outside our own neighborhood solar system is a three-star system called Alpha Centauri.

4. It is about 4.3 light years away from us.

5. Since light travels at 186,000 miles per second, Alpha Centauri is obviously a ways away.

6. We see this stars' light from four years ago!! Maybe it actually burned out three years ago...and we just don't know it yet!!

7. We can be that way...churches can be that way!

8. How many of us has been going through the motions of our faith, but have lost the meaning of a true, alive and intimate relationship with the Person of Jesus Christ?

C. Are you living off past obedience? Are you following rules or are you in love with a person? Have you simply chosen the Christian Religion or does your life belong to the Lover of your soul?

III. So what are the “eternal truths” of Jesus’ letter to Sardis?

A. It is the same truth spoken over and over by Jesus and those who wrote letters to churches that later became our scripture!!

Ephesians 4:1-6 (NIV)

4 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. 2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. 3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you

were called to one hope when you were called; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Colossians 1:9-11 (NIV)

9 For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, 10 so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, 11 being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience.

B. Jesus loves us too much to allow us to simple cruise through life and be “luke warm!” That’s something we will touch on later!

1. He wants us to live out our redemption!!
2. He wants us to walk in our restoration provided by His works of Salvation!
3. In short...He wants us to be like Him!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Philippians 2:1-5 (NIV)

2 Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, 4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. 5 In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.

* I want to be truly alive!!!!