

September 4, 2024

First Baptist Church ~ Covington, Louisiana

Waylon Bailey, Pastor

Revelation 3:1-6 RSV *The Church in Sardis*

Notice that no enemies or threats are described. The problem at Sardis is the people of Sardis. It is a heart issue. The message is to the angel of the church.

[3:1] "And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: 'The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars.' "I know your works; you have the name of being alive, and you are dead.

Sardis was called "Sardis the Impregnable" because it was situated upon a nearly inaccessible hill overlooking the Hermus Valley. Thus, the people were proud, arrogant, and over-confident.

The acropolis on which Sardis was built was too small for a growing city. Therefore, Sardis faced a slow but sure death.

[2] Awake, and strengthen what remains and is on the point of death, for I have not found your works perfect in the sight of my God.

Spiritually dead

[3] Remember then what you received and heard; keep that, and repent. If you will not awake, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come upon you.

In earlier times, Sardis had been attacked and overcome by a surprise night attack at the one weak point of the city – like a "thief in the night."

The seven (life-giving) spirits (3:1) and the seven stars (ministers of the Word) are able to revive a dead church.

[4] Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy.

Even in their spiritual state, Sardis had some who were faithful but most of the congregation had "defiled their garments."

[5] He who conquers shall be clad thus in white garments, and I will not blot his name out of the book of life; I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels.

White garments indicated holiness, purity, and perfection.

Christ Himself would acknowledge these faithful ones before the Father!

[6] He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

[3:7] "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: 'The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one shall shut, who shuts and no one opens.

Philadelphia received its name because of Attalus' (159-138BC) affection for his brother, Thus the name "brother lover."

Philadelphia was founded to spread the Greek language and manners in Lydia and Phrygia. Thus, it was a missionary city from the beginning.

The "key of David" refers to the highest power and authority in the Kingdom of God.

[8] "'I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut; I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.

Though their power is small, Christ sets before them an open door.

While we often think of an "open door" for evangelism, this may refer to the open door in heaven (Rev. 4:1). It emphasizes God's keeping them from the "hour of trial." (3:10)

Christians must endure persecution (John 16:33; Rev 7:14) but will be kept from the "hour of trial."

[9] Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie - behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and learn that I have loved you.

[10] Because you have kept my word of patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial which is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell upon the earth.

[11] I am coming soon; hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown.

[12] He who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God; never shall he go out of it, and 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 from my God out of heaven, and my own new name.

A "pillar" indicates permanence.

The name of "the city of my God" is the New Jerusalem.

[13] He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

Revelation 3:14-22 RSV *The Church at Laodicea*

[3:14] "And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: 'The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation.

Laodicea had hot springs. They knew about lukewarm water.

Because they were hypocritical and unfaithful, Christ introduces Himself as "faithful and true!"

This is Christ's last appeal to any congregation that has shut Him out. It is also an indictment against. Then Paul also mentioned Laodicea.

[15] "I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were cold or hot!

[16] So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth.

This emotion of Christ is not found anywhere else in Revelation. He is disgusted with them and spews them out of His mouth!

[17] For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing; not knowing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.

It was a city of wealth, where three trading highways crossed. It had a school of medicine which produced a remedy for weak eyes.

Laodicea even refused government aid after a devastating earthquake. They were rich – and knew it!

Both city and church were proud and arrogant.

"Pitiable" not "miserable." Who is more to be pitied than one who thinks he does not need Christ?

[18] Therefore I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, that you may be rich, and white garments to clothe you and to keep the shame of your nakedness from being seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see.

[19] Those whom I love, I reprove and chasten; so be zealous and repent.

[20] Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.

Christ takes the initiative. He presses against the door and knocks.

Notice the divine initiative and human responsibility. This is what we find throughout Scripture.

Eating together showed special friendship and covenant relationship.

[21] He who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I myself conquered 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."