

Call to Worship

L: Blessed are You, O Lord God of Israel our father, forever and ever.

All: Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, power, the glory, the victory and the majesty both in heaven and in earth!

L: Yours is the dominion, O Lord, and You exalt Yourself as head over all

All: Both riches and honor come from You, and You rule over all!

L: In Your hand is power and might; and it lies in Your hand to make great and to strengthen everyone

All: Now therefore, we come before You, our God, with thanksgiving to praise Your glorious name

Church of Sardis

Revelation 3:1-22 NIV 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 not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God. 3 Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, 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 He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels.

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

Church of Sardis

INTRODUCTION:

We are looking at the 7 churches in Revelations that Jesus spoke to, thru the Apostle John. Today we will look at Churches of the Living Dead... the Church of Sardis This is part 7 in our series...

AND JESUS WORD'S AND ADMONITIONS TO THEM..TO US!

But before we do .. .let us pray.

People often say, "I wish we could have church like they did in the first century." Which church? Their churches face all the problems we face today.

I WANT US TO CONSIDER WHAT THE CITY OF SARDIS WAS LIKE...

SARDIS, Sardis is About 50 miles inland from the Aegean Sea, and 30 miles southeast of Thyatira, in what is now Turkey, located on high plateau
Sardis was the

- **capital of the ancient kingdom of Lydia which covered all of Asia Minor as far back as the time of the Judges,**
- **when kingdom fell to Persians, it became one of the most important cities of that Empire,**
- **remained leading city of trade, commerce/exchange of ideas under Greek rule**
- **and later the capital of the province Lydia in Roman times.**

Because It was located At the crossroads of five major trade routes it was a very wealthy city. **For centuries, Sardis was acclaimed thruout the then-known world for her riches/ power, political and spiritual importance.**

The cities of the ancient world held Sardis in great respect and The greatness of those grand and glorious days of the past were never forgotten by the people of Sardis. They were proud of their heritage.

But when we consider the city of Sardis during NT times we see only a glimmer of her former greatness.

- As civilization and government became more complex the high plateau that housed Sardis became too small to house the great governmental center, so it was abandoned in favor of the plain below. **Once the seat of governmental authority it lost that to city of Pergamum.**
- Once a capital of a war machine, Sardis was a place that once was greatly feared, respected but now was now just another city... The buildings remained as a mere monument of the past.
- Sardis main claim now was that it had lots of money, & luxury it brought.
- **NOTED ALSO FOR ITS WORSHIP OF THE GODDESS CYEBELLE...**

ABOUT SARDIS' TEMPLE & GODDESS

Cybele Temple was one of the most imposing structures in Sardis, and its size tells of the importance she had to the people of Sardis.

Cybele thought to be “the Great Mother, or Mother of the gods” Her led worship with perverse and immoral ceremonies complete with wild music, drumming, dancing and drunkenness, sex of all types. Her most dedicated followers were males who ritually castrated themselves, after which they were given women's clothing and assumed "female" identities. This was a city caught up in degenerate immorality!

Sardis was no longer an important city, holding political power, no longer the capital of a Kingdom.

But While many things had changed concerning Sardis importance, a couple of things hadn't changed...

Wealth still abounded in the city and they were proud of their past. But the people for the most part were caught up in degenerate demonic worship which because of the wealth of their area they had plenty of time to do!

TO sum it up, the citizens of Sardis

- were no longer important players in the world of power,
- their worship and led them to become pleasure-loving, narcissitic, heathenistic, self-indulgent degenerates who thought they major players.
- Sardis once a great power was now a city of the past. She had a name, and a reputation, but she was dead.
- And it seems that this was the case for the church as well!

One of the first things I noticed when I read this text is that unlike the other churches Jesus doesn't start with what they are doing good...

he goes right to the point

YOU HAVE A REPUTATION FOR BEING ALIVE BUT YOU'RE DEAD!

Might seem like your doing good, look good, city loves you, other churches want to copy you... but I KNOW

- **THE CHURCH GOT OFF TO A GOOD START!** People were rescued from the sinful and fruitless lives. In the middle of a city under the rule of demonic power, people were being made alive by Christ. Fleeing their old lives and embracing the new life!
- **I THINK THIS IS WHERE THEY RECEIVED THEIR REPUTATION...** wow, god is at work even in sardis! Did you hear the testimony of that guy last week visiting our church? What a change has happened to him! That church is on fire man!
- They probably originally had a "bad" reputation among the lost sinners of Sardis. Oh those guys! They are so backward, such bigots! They cling to some old fashioned idea that we are to live moral lives, men are to be men, and women, women! Wow, what losers! They don't appreciate spirituality
- **They ought to be outlawed! Arrested for hate speech!** Etc:)
- **A church that's alive doesn't have peace with the world because its at war with the world!** A church praised by the world is a church in trouble!

Sardis had troubles that made it a dead church: use this term carefully

- **WHAT ITS NOT!** *Dead church isn't a term to throw about.*
 - *Many use this term when they visit a church and don't like the music (too slow, too many hymns, service is too short).*
 - *It's dead, there are almost no programs: (what they mean is its small, or rural) NO sally, small is not dead, its just small:)*
 - *no mops, youth group only has 4 kids / they meet once a month!*
 - *Pastor preaches long, music too long, short, no lifts up their hands in worship, everyone does... Style isn't what Jesus is talking about!*

Sardis had troubles that made it a dead church:

Sardis had troubles that made it a dead church:

- **Suffered from narcolepsy:** vs 2 *Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, Wake up! You are asleep at the wheel! I have saved appointed you to be my witnesses! Get up, get back to your beginnings!*
- **Dropping the Ball (Bermuda baseball?)** vs 2 *for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God. They were no longer growing spiritually, no longer accomplishing the work of Christ in their own lives, in church.. They had dropped the ball.. The only ball they were playing was “hero ball”, everyone doing their own thing!*
- **Amnesia and Alzheimers : Memory problems:** heard / recieved the Gospel and had forgotten it! Jesus says in 3 *Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent.*
- **They chameleon-ed!** *like lizard that changes for its enviroment) the Church & Christians became like the culture. **NO LONGER STOOD AGAINST THE DARKNESS** darkness filled the church!*
- *It’s easy to happen that what we might think!*

Their city/region was under the oppressive power of demons who exerted great influence on the unredeemed. (Our battle is not with flesh and blood) Remember the the worship of Cybele? With its perverted immoral orgies done in the name of spirituality?

THIS FORM OF WORSHIP WAS ACCEPTED, CELEBTATED AND PRACTISED BY THE COMMUNITY, SCHOOL TEACHERS, NEIGHBORS. TO NOT AGREE WITH IT WOULD PUT YOU AT ODDS WITH ALMOST EVERYONE IN YOUR HOME TOWN!

- **AT SOME POINT CHURCH GAVE IN!** *There was no persecution which says something about the Church! They lived in a city that was known for its immorality and yet there was no conflict like other churches faced !*
- **One writer called church at Sardis “the perfect model of inoffensive Christianity.”** *the Jews / Romans didn’t bother the church because the church didn’t bother them. It was left alone because it lacked the conviction to stir the waters and make any waves.*

- It was no longer at war with world. At first it was probably
 - **JUST SILENT OUT OF FEAR OF REJECTION/ CONSEQUENCE**
 - **DECIDED THAT IT WASN'T REALLY THAT BAD**
 - **ACCEPTED/WELCOMED INTO CHURCH THOSE PRACTISED DEMONIC WORSHIP**
 - **AND THEN MANY MEMBERS BEGAN PRACTICING**

WE KNOW IT BECAUSE JESUS SAID THAT THERE WERE ONLY A FEW THAT HAD NOT "SOILED THEMSELVES IN THE SIN OF THE DAY!"

THE CHURCH WAS DEAD, ASLEEP AND DIDN'T EVEN KNOW IT!

Judges 16:20 Delilah said, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson." He awoke out of his sleep, and said, "I will go out as at other times, and shake myself free." But he didn't know that the LORD had departed from him. Story of Eli ... Ichabod...

Revelation 3:1-22 NIV 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 not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God.

3 Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent.

• WAKE UP! STRENGTHEN WHAT REMAINS!

• REMEMBER WHAT YOU RECEIVED

• OBEY IT!

• REPENT

IMPLICIT IN THIS IS JESUS LOVE FOR HIS PEOPLE, HIS WILLINGNESS TO FORGIVE AND RESTORE

CONSEQUENCE;

• 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

PROMISE:

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 He who overcomes will, like them,

• be dressed in white.

• I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels.

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

• **Conclusions:**

- We are at war with the world: that's okay, its normal!
- Its not enough to have a good start as church or Christian we want to make sure we "finish the race" ...
- We can't get rest on reputation but deal with reality...
- Let's examine ourselves and make sure we aren't getting sleepy
- satan's goal is to cause the church to be ineffective:
 - By infiltrate the church with false teachers who will seduce God's people into believing and practicing what the world believes and practices
 - Or hoping the pressure of war with the world will wear them out and they will simply surrender!

•

We must therefore

- Allow The word of God must guide as to what is right, wrong, godly or ungodly.

So let us know what the Lord teaches about how to live a life that is pleasing to Him! **And let us hold fast to the teachings of Jesus!**

Let us not make a truce with the enemy by accepting lies!

Let us practise and preach the Word of God! Let us believe receive and exalt the Word of God in our lives, families and in our church!