

Chapter 3

SARDIS: 3:1-6

- A. The Church Living in the Past
- a. A once-illustrious city
 - b. Nothing good is said about Sardis – at least about the congregation as a whole
 - i. Sardis had a faithful few
 - c. There were 3 attributes of the city that were reflected by the church:
 - i. Sardis had a history of past glory
 1. One of the oldest and greatest cities in Asia
 2. Wealthy, beautiful, modern, a major crossroads city
 3. A very commercial city
 - ii. Sardis had a history of overconfidence
 1. The original city built atop a natural citadel, a spur of Mount Tmolus
 2. Access to the city was achieved by crossing a narrow causeway and could be defended by a handful of men...seemed impenetrable!
 3. The King believed an oracle that said he could defeat Cyrus the Persian
 4. Instead, Cyrus offered a reward to anyone who could find a way into the city other than the causeway...
 - a. A Persian soldier discovered some Sardian soldiers and found a "back way" that, at night, was unguarded due to their overconfidence...
 - b. The city fell then...and then fell similarly fell again 100 years later.
 - iii. By the end of the first century, Sardis was living on past glory.
 1. In A.D., the city could never regain its former glory to due to captivity and being conquered.
 2. It was a 3rd rate town living in the past.

<u>From Jesus</u>	<u>Verse</u>	<u>Description</u>
Salutation	1	To the angel of the church in Sardis write...
Description of Jesus	1	"who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars"
Commendation	NONE	NONE
Condemnation	1-2	"I know your deeds; a name that you are alive but you are dead; I have not found your works perfect before God..."
Warning/Threat	3	"hold fast and repent; I will come as a thief and you will not know the hour..."
Exhortation	6	"He who has an ear..."

Promise	4-5	"a faithful names; they shall walk with Me in white; they are worthy; shall be clothed in white garments; I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels..."
---------	-----	--

Additional notes:

B. Verse 1

- a. Jesus designation of himself – the one “who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars”.
 - i. Reference to the Holy Spirit and the churches
 1. There to help and strengthen Christians
 - a. Acts 2:38
 - b. Acts 5:32
 - c. Romans 8:11, 13, 26
 2. This shows that Jesus is ready and able to comfort Christians
 3. Jesus holds these in his right hand (1:16), the hand of power
- b. Why start with a consolation without a commendation?
 - i. Most likely to encourage the faithful few
- c. Condemnation
 - i. “I know your deeds” – not a good “I know” this time
 - ii. Because of their glorious past, they might have expected lavish praise from Jesus, but his evaluation is nothing of the sort...
 1. “you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead”
 - a. The difference between reputation and character
 - b. Reputation is what people think you are
 - c. Character is what you really are
 - d. Sardis probably had a good outward “show”, but lacked substance
 - e. The church was dead spiritually

C. Verse 2

- a. Four symptoms of their terminal illness:
 - i. Drowsiness – Jesus told them to “Wake up!”
 - ii. Lethargy
 1. At one time they were enthusiastic
 2. Their works were not “perfect before God”
 - a. This gives the idea that they lost interest in the work
 - b. They finished nothing
 - iii. Apathy
 1. Many of the Christians in Sardis were “defiled” and were indistinguishable from their pagan neighbors
 2. They had become indifferent to Christ’s commands
 - iv. Susceptibility
 1. Where were the trials and tribulations at Sardis as found in other churches?
 - a. They had no false teachers
 - b. They had no persecution with unbelieving Jews
 - c. They were not about to be cast into prison

- d. No one had died for the faith
 - 2. They were a peaceful congregation – peaceful like a cemetery.
 - 3. They were the harmless religious group on the corner!
 - b. Christ makes a passionate appeal for their souls: “Be watchful” or “WAKE UP!”
 - i. “the things which remain’
 - 1. Anything that’s left alive in the hearts of the congregation
 - 2. Any spark, re-light that fire!
 - ii. How could they be dead and yet not?
 - 1. The Great Physician never gives up!
 - 2. With Him, there is always hope...

D. Verse 3

- a. They were instructed to remember, retain, and repent
 - i. Remember = keep in mind
 - ii. Retain = continue to hold on to these things
 - iii. Repent = turn from these ways and go back to how it should be
- b. Warning/Threat
 - i. If you will not watch...
 - 1. Jesus warned them to repent or be prepared to suffer the consequences of their actions
 - 2. Jesus likens himself to a “thief”
 - a. Matthew 24:42-44
 - b. Luke 12:39,40
 - c. 1 Thess. 5:2,4
 - d. 2 Peter 3:10

E. Verse 4

- a. Here, he takes a moment to recognize the faithful
 - i. They had not defiled themselves or their lives with the immorality of the city that surrounded them...
 - ii. They will walk with me in white
 - 1. Jesus would gladly associate with these faithful
 - 2. White indicates purity, festivity and victory
 - 3. To walk with Christ would indicate participating in His triumph
 - iii. For they are worthy
 - 1. Not saying they are “perfect” but an expression of appreciation for their efforts and faithfulness.
 - 2. God is thankful!

F. Verse 5

- a. Is the situation hopeless? Not at all!
 - i. The promise is offered:
 - 1. Spiritual clothing: clothed in white garments
 - a. Same garments promised to the faithful few
 - b. Washed in the blood of the Lamb
 - 2. A significant continuity: will not erase his name from the Book of Life
 - a. The record of God’s faithful (Ps. 69:28; Mal. 3:16; Heb. 12:23)
 - b. Also seen in the Judgment scene in Rev. 20

- c. Only those whose name is in the Book can enter heaven (21:27)
- 3. A special confession: confess his name before My Father
 - a. Jesus made this promise during his earthly ministry (Matthew 10:32,33; Luke 12:8,9)
 - b. If we confess His name, he will confess ours! What a special gift!

G. Verse 6

- a. The letter ends with the familiar exhortation: He who has an ear...
- b. It isn't known how this letter was received by Sardis...
 - i. Evidence suggests that Sardis grew in size at least and had some outstanding leaders in later years...
 - ii. Today, ruins are all that remains...and there is no congregation there...

PHILADELPHIA (3:7-13)

- A. The Church that did what it could with what it had...
- B. Considered by many the "best" church addressed by Christ in one of the seven letters
- C. Characteristics
 - a. Not as large or prosperous as coastal cities
 - b. Memorable qualities
 - i. It's name honored the king of Pergamum, Attalus II Philadelphus
 - 1. Philadelphus = love (philia) + brother (adelphos) → brotherly love
 - 2. Incidentally, the motto of Philadelphia, PA
 - ii. Located along the trade routes – known as gateway to the east
 - iii. Established as a missionary city to spread the Greek language and culture
 - iv. Known for its wine production
 - v. Sometimes referred to as "little Athens" due to it's magnificent architecture
 - vi. Built on a fault line and experienced it's fair share of earthquakes
 - 1. Destroyed in AD 17 by a terrible earthquake
 - 2. Many, because of this great fear, live in the country outside the city
 - vii. Little excavation has been done or is possible because the modern city of Alasehir is built on the land

<u>From Jesus</u>	<u>Verse</u>	<u>Description</u>
Salutation	7	"...to the angel of the church in Philadelphia..."
Description of Jesus	7	"He who is holy; He who is true; He who has the key of David; He who opens and no one will shut; he who shuts and no one opens..."
Commendation	8	"I know your deeds; you have kept my word and have not denied My name..."
Condemnation	NONE	NONE

Encouragement	11	"I come quickly; hold fast that no one may take your crown"
Promise	9,10,12	"I will make those of the synagogue of Satan...to come and worship before your feet and to know I have loved you; I will keep you from the hour of trial; 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); I will write on him My new name..."
Exhortation	13	"He who has an ear..."

Additional Notes:

D. Verse 7

- a. Jesus immediately offers comfort by reminding them who He was
 - i. "He who is holy"
 1. This Greek term (ho hagios) were words meaning "the holy One" – an original term reserved for God (Is 40:25; Hab 3:3; Rev. 6:10)
 2. He affirmed his deity
 3. This description would have reassured persecuted Christians of the guarantee that evildoers would be punished
 - ii. "who is true"
 1. Literally "the true One"
 2. Philadelphia was filled with false gods and even false Jews (v 9) – this reassured that Jesus was genuine and reliable
 - iii. "He who has the key of David"
 1. Image taken from Isaiah 22:15-25
 - a. Eliakim, trusted servant of King Hezekiah, given charge of the "key of the house of David"
 - b. Eliakim had sole right to admit or deny someone into the king's presence
 2. Possession of a key gives the image and idea of authority to admit or refuse admittance
 3. Jesus had total authority over all in heaven and on earth
 4. That it was "David's key" showed he was the Messiah, descending from King David (2 Sam. 7:16; Acts 2:30-36)
 5. He had sole possession – who he opened, no one could shut; what he shut, no one could open.
 - a. He put an "open door" before the church at Philadelphia (v 8)

E. Verse 8

- a. There is no condemnation in this letter for the congregation at Philadelphia; but there's plenty of praise and Commendation!
 - i. "little strength"
 1. Not a put down, but a statement of fact
 2. They may have been small in number or talent or financial resources or even their social position of many or most of the members

3. He was showing that though they were "little" they were productive and did not use that as an excuse to do nothing.
4. They made due with what they had!
- ii. "...kept my word and not denied My name..."
 1. They were faithful to the core!
 2. They stood their ground when confronted and persevered under pressure...and not by their own power, but with God's power!
- iii. "...open door"
 1. Because of their faithfulness, their blessings would be amazing...
 2. The figure of the open door represents not only Christ's power over all, but the special opportunities laid before them to spread the Gospel...
 3. Also relays the idea that even though Christ opens the door of opportunity, it is we who must walk through it...
- iv. "which no one can shut"
 1. There would likely be those who would try
 2. Satan doesn't like, or often allow, easy evangelism

F. Verse 9

- a. "I will cause those of the synagogue of Satan...[to] bow down at your feet..."
 - i. "synagogue of Satan" should be familiar – introduced to Smyrna
 1. Most simply, those Jews who rejected Christ as Messiah
 2. Smyrna and Philadelphia had the common ground of being persecuted by Jews!
 - ii. "bow down at your feet" or "worship"
 1. A strong promise!
 2. This particular Greek word used here (proskuneō) denotes an act of reverence paid to a creature or the Creator
 - a. Not specifically sure how this was going to manifest itself:
 - i. Reference to Jews in Philadelphia becoming Christians as part of that "open door" promise
 - ii. Reference to Jews begrudgingly admitting that Christians were God's special people
 - iii. Really, we're unsure, but ultimately we know that unbelievers AND believers alike would acknowledge Christ as the Son of God... (Rom. 14:11; Phil. 2:10,11)

G. Verse 10

- a. "kept the word of My perseverance" or "kept My command to persevere"
 - i. Jesus left us not just a "sermon" about perseverance but an example (Matt. 24:13 and Heb. 12:2,3 respectively)
- b. "hour of testing"
 - i. Increased persecution that was just around the corner...
 - ii. Premillennialists teach that this "hour" is the seven-year Tribulation
 1. This hour was about to come upon the whole world (literal translation)
 2. Chapters 6 through 19 show that period of testing
 3. Notice this would be upon the "whole world" not just Christians
 - a. Probably specifically those under the umbrella of the Roman Empire
- c. "test those who dwell upon the earth..."
 - i. one purpose of the testing is to bring people to repentance
 - ii. Isn't that one of God's purposes for allowing suffering and trials? (2 Peter 3:9)

- iii. A test also reveals one's true nature
- d. Jesus main point here is that he would keep (or guard or protect) Christians from that "hour of testing"...
 - i. Jesus did not miraculously inoculate Christians so they were immune to war, famine, and pestilence...
 - ii. Jesus, more specifically, meant that he would bring Christians through safely to the other side *spiritually* speaking...not necessarily physically!

H. Verse 11

- a. "I am coming quickly"
 - i. Again, reassurance to the faithful that they would be protected and their enemies would be punished.
 - ii. This is a coming during their lifetime – not necessarily a physical coming, but more a reference to a spiritual overcoming.
 - iii. Not referencing the Second Coming
- b. "Hold fast...so that no one will take your crown."
 - i. Again, crown is same as 2:10 – stephanos, the crown of victory.
 - ii. Notice, the crown *could* be taken, but only if we allow it to be taken!
 - iii. Although they may have had little "physically", spiritually they were rich!
 - 1. Salvation
 - 2. the Word
 - 3. their faith in God
 - 4. The strength God had given them
 - 5. new opportunities
 - 6. Jesus' promises
 - iv. This "holding fast" is a continuous motion, not a one time action.

I. Verse 12

- a. "He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore."
 - i. A pillar refers to something that supports and sustains and is prominent (1 Tim. 3:15; Gal 2:9).
 - 1. "A pillar of strength"
 - 2. "A pillar of the community"
 - 3. In NT times, pillars were erected to honor individuals
 - a. Engraved their name
 - b. Information given about them
 - c. Similar to memorial plaques of today
 - d. Perhaps Jesus alluded to the prominence of the "weak" Philadelphians in the life to come? Or in the eyes of God?
 - ii. Temple likely refers to heaven here due to context and the fact that it does so in most of Revelation.
 - iii. "...he will not go out..."
 - 1. A simple inference to permanent habitation
 - 2. Once you're in heaven, you're a permanent fixture!
 - 3. Psalm 27:4
- b. "...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 My new name."

- i. These will be written upon each pillar
- ii. Enhances the pillar and indicates a close tie with the divine God
- iii. "...the New Jerusalem..."
 - 1. Another reference to heaven (21:2,10)
 - 2. "comes down out of heaven"
 - a. the language here most likely refers to the glorified church in the heavenly realms
 - b. not the church or kingdom on earth
 - c. We will touch on this later in chapter 21 further
 - 3. The "new address" will be etched on those pillars in heaven!
- iv. "...My new name..."
 - 1. Perhaps the same as mentioned back in 2:17
 - 2. Just as a bride would take her groom's name, so does the church when it is received unto Christ, the bridegroom (see 19:7)...

J. Verse 13

- a. Ending with the exhortation for each Christian who hears these words!

LAODICEA: 3:14-22

A. The Church That Had it Made

- a. 43 miles SE of Philadelphia
- b. Today, the ruins of Laodicea are extensive
- c. From here, an 80-mile trip west would bring one back to Ephesus in a full circle journey
- d. Destroyed by an earthquake around AD 60

B. Three important characteristics

- a. Many of the citizens were wealthy
 - i. One of the richest commercial cities of it's time
 - ii. Was a financial center of sorts with many of the great banks of it's time
 - iii. Many who lived there had an "I need nothing" attitude
 - iv. When the great quake hit, they refused help from Rome and rebuilt at their own expense...
- b. In general, they were healthy.
 - i. A center point for some of the known world's great medical facilities and medical aids.
 - ii. In fact, there are still health resorts in the area today due to natural pools of hot springs...
- c. Most of them were well clothed.
 - i. Most clothing derived from the fine wool of the local black sheep.
 - ii. It was soft, glossy and fetched a high price in the outside marketplaces but was very affordable for Laodiceans
 - iii. Here, if you were a "black sheep", it might have meant you were *really* well clothed, not necessarily the family outcast.

<u>From Jesus</u>	<u>Verse</u>	<u>Description</u>
Salutation	14	"To the angel..."
Description of Jesus	14	"The Amen, the Faithful, and the true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God..."
Commendation	NONE	NONE
Condemnation	15/16	"I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I spit you out of my mouth..."
Warning/Threat	17-19	"...you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked; be zealous and repent!"
Promise	20-21	"I stand at the door and knock...opens the door, I will come in; I will grant him to sit down with Me on My throne..."
Exhortation	22	"He who has an ear..."

Additional Notes:

C. Verse 14

a. To the angel...

i. They had been in existence for about 30 years by this time

1. Probably established while Paul at Ephesus
2. Likely established by his coworker Epaphras – who helped establish church in Colossae
3. The church is referenced in the letter from Paul to the Colossians (Col. 2:1; 4:15,16)

b. Description of Christ

i. Unique characteristic:

1. It is the only letter in which most of the phrases that Jesus used to identify Himself are not a reflection of the terms used in the first chapter of Revelation
2. Jesus felt the need to adapt this letter to their specific needs – these characteristics are complete opposites of the characteristics of the church at Laodicea.

ii. The names:

1. The Amen

- a. Only time the word "amen" appears as a proper name
- b. This word was first a Hebrew word then a Greek word and now an English word...
- c. Essentially it is an affirmation of truthfulness
- d. The word that we translate as "truly" or "verily" by Christ (Matt. 5:18; Jn 1:51) is really the word "amen"

2. The Faithful and True Witness

- a. Coupled with “amen” this presents a powerful statement
- b. The emphasis rests on his trustworthiness
- c. This would have been in direct opposition to Laodicea’s trust in uncertain riches instead of Christ.
- iii. They were the only church to receive no commendation AT ALL!
 - 1. Sardis received none as a group, but the faithful few got something!
 - 2. Laodicea had nothing to commend – no one to commend.
- iv. “The Beginning of the creation of God...”
 - 1. The word beginning here could be more accurately translated “origin” or “source”
 - 2. Jesus was the true firstborn of all creation (note Col. 1:15-17)
 - 3. We could read this as “the One who began it all”
 - 4. Spiritual creation may also be implied, but more likely reference to the physical in this phrasing...

D. Verse 15

- a. “I know your deeds...”
 - i. They were doing something...but whatever they were doing had to do with money and something they could boast about!
 - ii. These were not necessarily enthusiastic works of deeply committed Christians.
- b. “...you are neither cold nor hot...”
 - i. “hot” means to be “boiling hot”
 - ii. “cold” must mean “icy cold”, right?
 - 1. Could be referring to a “cool, refreshing water” – much like the cool springs near Colossae
 - 2. Stands in contrast to the medicinal hot springs of some of their neighbors
 - 3. This is the same word found in Matt. 10:42 in reference to a “cup of cold water.”
 - 4. Traditionally many have believed this to refer to being spiritually cold – much like an unbeliever would be.
 - iii. Either way, only the lukewarm state of being is being addressed as undesirable.
 - 1. They were indifferent
 - iv. Why would Jesus suggest being “cold” is better than being “lukewarm”?
 - 1. Icy coldness is more honest – it makes no claim of being a Christian
 - 2. More hope of changing someone who is icy cold than someone complacent in their “lukewarm-ness”
 - 3. Lukewarm-ness actually hurts the church more than coldness does (think about hypocrites!).
 - v. And notice that there is no mention of persecution or perseverance!

E. Verse 16

- a. “...spit you out of My mouth...”
 - i. Literally, he was about to do this – he was *going* to do this!
 - ii. More literally, vomit – “you make me want to vomit!”
 - iii. Lukewarm water has been often used to make people throw up when they ingest something harmful.
 - iv. Unless they repented, they could not have a close relationship with Christ.
 - v. This was eternal destiny at stake...

F. Verse 17

- a. "...You say, 'I am rich...'"
 - i. They didn't see things as Christ saw them.
 - ii. They seemed to even be *proud* of their spiritual state!
 - iii. The original text said, "I am rich and I have become rich and I have no need."
 1. Literally, "I am RICH, RICH, RICH!!!"
 - iv. They may have thought because they were rich physically they must be rich spiritually...
 1. Many may still think that today!
- b. "...you do not know that you are wretched..."
 - i. They were lying to themselves and didn't see themselves for what they really were!
 1. Wretched
 - a. "worn out and fatigued with grievous labors, as they who labor in a stone quarry, or are condemned to the mines"
 - b. They weren't millionaires...they were destitute slaves.
 2. Miserable
 - a. Objects of pity not praise
 - b. They needed mercy!
 3. Poor
 - a. They thought they were rich, but they were not!
 - b. They had, literally, NOTHING!
 4. Blind
 - a. They couldn't see themselves for who they really were
 - b. And they didn't see or understand the true nature of Christianity
 5. Naked
 - a. Like the emperor in "The Emperor's New Clothes"
 - b. They thought they were dressed in the finest, but they were naked as the day they were born – well, spiritually speaking!
 - c. Throughout Scriptures, nakedness is synonymous with shame
 - d. To be stripped or disrobed against one's will is disgraceful

G. Verse 18

- a. The situation wasn't hopeless, but it was serious!
 - i. Jesus advised them to seek true riches in Him, not earthly treasures!
 - ii. Remember what Jesus said in Matt. 6:19-20 about storing up our treasures...
- b. The symbolism of white
 - i. Those who are clothed with it are washed in the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 7:13-14)
 - ii. The bride is in white and the linen represented the righteous acts of the saints.
- c. Eyesalve
 - i. To anoint their eyes so they could truly see – they needed a new perspective!
- d. "buy"
 - i. While we cannot "earn" our salvation – the Christian life does cost something!
 - ii. Sacrifice is a necessary part of who we are as God's people!
 - iii. That price needed to be paid, in that respect, by them!

- iv. They needed to admit they were not self-sufficient and put their pride aside and their indifference and take Christ's advice!

H. Verse 19

- a. They must have thought he hated them...on the contrary!
- b. "Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline..."
 - i. Hebrew writer noted this as well (Heb. 12:6)
 - ii. To remain silent when ones we love are in danger is not love, is it lack of love!
- c. They needed to change their attitudes!
 - i. Jesus gave them simple instructions
 - 1. Be zealous
 - 2. Be repentant
 - ii. Not just once, but continually!

I. Verse 20

- a. And the "ball is in their court..."
 - i. "I stand at the door and knock..."
 - ii. Jesus desires to come in to our lives
 - iii. He would dine with those who let him in...
 - iv. But he wasn't going to break the door down and barge in...he would wait patiently waiting to be invited in...
- b. Shocking words
 - i. These words would have likely shocked the Laodiceans
 - ii. They weren't likely aware of their complacency, but it was real.

J. Verse 21

- a. Wondrous blessings
 - i. For those who overcame here, imagine the blessings!
 - ii. Those who overcame would get to reign with him – an overwhelming truth in Revelation (which we will see).

Coming up...Chapter 4: The Throne Room of God