

Revelation – Sardis

1. Salutation

“To the angel of the church at Sardis, write...”

- o founded ~ 2000 BC - ancient capital of Lydia, province of Asia Minor
- o patron deity - goddess Cybele - became Artemis/Diana
- o Cybele's son was Midas - legend
- o extremely wealthy city
- o significant Jewish/Christian population
- o “Despite the city's paganism, the Christian community seems to have experienced no persecution—and hence no spiritual life.” – Keener
- o built on a plateau 1,500 feet above plain – high cliffs - accessible only via one narrow passage - base of the cliff was Pactolus River
- o considered impregnable
- o 549 BCE, Persian King Cyrus conquered city
- o 214 BC - Antiochus I of Greece conquered city
- o 17 AD - city devastated by a severe earthquake.

2. Title

These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits¹ of God and the seven stars.

Sevenfold spirit from Isaiah 11

3. Commendation (None)

4. Condemnation

I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. ²Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have found your deeds unfinished in the sight of my God.... “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.” (vs. 1-3)

Sardis means “those escaping” or “that which remains.” – believed they were spiritually impregnable; overconfident - Jesus in their midst

Prophetic Profile

Sardis symbolizes the church following the Reformation. How so?

“Then came the Sardian period - the age of separation and return to the rule of Christ. The age of comparative freedom from Balaam and his doctrines, from the Nicolaitans and their tenants, from Jezebel and her fornication. An age of many worthy names, but marked with deadness within, and having much of which to repent; an age covering the spiritual

lethargy of the Protestant countries before the great evangelical movements of the last hundred years, which brought us to the Philadelphian era." (JA Seiss: "Apocalypse: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation)

"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."

Reformation began with great promise: Zingli, Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox of Scotland, John Huss of Bohemia, John Wesley

"the paradox of death under the name of life." Swete

"they had a form of godliness but denied the power". 2 Tim 3:5

"The Reformers began well, but many of their successors were not so consecrated as they and so their works were not found perfect before God. They had a name to live up to and yet were dead, and the life of vital godliness which sprang from the great doctrines of the Reformers, gradually degenerated into lifeless formalism, until at the time of John Wesley the conditions were such that many of the ministers of the established churches of Europe were drunkards and liberals and were among the lowest of the people. Men like the Wesley's, Whitfield and the Puritans began to protest against these things with such earnestness and unction of the Spirit of God that they succeeded in bringing about the modern revival and missionary period typified by the conditions at Philadelphia."

Samuel Turner

Over 34,000 denominations in the world - 35 million churches

"Protestantism has made no converts to speak of in Europe since the sixteenth century. It shot up in two generations to its full stature, and became an established creed with defined boundaries; and the many millions who in Catholic countries proclaim their indifference to their own religion, either by neglect or contempt, do not swell the congregations of the Protestant church. Their objections to the Church of Rome are objections equally to all forms of dogmatic and doctrinal Christianity."

James Anthony Froude

"I have not found thy works perfect before God"

"The new spiritual life engendered by the message of the Reformers soon languished, and eventually ended in stagnation and death. With all the boasting and pretence of life there was little left except a hollow shell and a lifeless form. The great enemy had gained a victory on a new battlefield. He had entered the church in disguise and accomplished from within what he had never been able to do from without." Seiss

"The day is not far distant, and it may be very near, when we shall have to fight the battle of the Reformation over again." (Sir Robert Peel, 1840)

5. Counsel (Vs.3)

Counselled: Remember, Hold on to what they have received; Repent.

Parable of Ten Virgins - Matthew 25

Warning: Matthew 7.21-23

6. Promise

The promise is threefold. They are to be clothed in the symbolic white robes of victory; their names will not be blotted out of the book of life and Christ will confess their names before His Father and the angels.

White used as symbol of purity and triumph. (Zech 3:3-5; Rev 7:13, 14; 19:7, 8, 11-14.)

7. Exhortation

Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

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