

Revelation 3

Introduction:

As we continue to look at the list of churches in the book of Revelation that Jesus spoke to, we continue to see He follows the similar format to the previous churches. In chapter 3, He speaks with the church at Sardis, the church at Philadelphia and the church of the Laodiceans. He continues to encourage them along the way. He deals with their behaviors, attitudes and their operation. He continues to follow the same procedure of highlighting the good the church is doing, including the bad or areas in need of improvement combined with a fix or repair to improve the situation. He also includes a reward if they choose to follow His plan. As one looks at this, they can see the merciful greatness of our God. He always wants to highlight the good that we do, improve or correct the areas of bad that we are in need of and teach us how to repair those situations. He then follows this by a reward or blessing. What a great Saviour we have.

The Church at Sardis

The church at Sardis is again another church in the area of modern Day Turkey, that Jesus pointed out as one of the seven that He chooses to deal with.

The Good:

He began with a good and pointed out that He knew their works. What a tremendous compliment to any work the statement “work”. What the church's status was known for is that it worked. He continued this thought with the statement that thou has the name “that thou livest” in other words, this a working church, but it was also an alive church, at least it was at some point. Oh, that all churches would realize the importance of being a living church. That can only be possible when the church allows God’s Spirit to work through them.

The Bad:

It was at one point an alive church doing something for the Lord, or better yet in this context had done something for the Lord, but now we transition to the bad because the Savior pointed out that though this church at one point was alive they due to reasons not really explained have chosen to die. Jesus promised the church perpetuity or everlasting protection. Jesus promised that even the “gates of hell” should not prevail against the church so if a church fails, it has chosen to fail against the will of the Lord. This is a sobering thought for many like to think that a church is an entity or group not connected to God; yet even our smallest of churches are directly connected to God. He cares for them, He loves them and He desires that they survive. Because of this fact, it behooves us to do our part while we are here on this earth to plug ourselves into the church of God in our locality and do our best to see to it that she survives and even thrives in hopes to preserve her for the next generation who will need her.

The Fix:

Our gracious Savior, in spite of the struggles of this church, explained a remarkably simple process to fix the problem that had plagued this church. He simply encouraged the church to be watchful and strong by strengthening those who were weak. The strength that He is referring to is further explained by pointing out that the works were to be perfect before God. Perfect meaning complete. In other words, they were following God’s

plan, He stressed the need for them to remember what they had received – the Truth. They are to hold fast to those Godly principles and repent. Repent meaning a change of mind. A change of mind is needed to get this Church back into working order. This all comes with an important warning. A warning, reminding them that He will come as a thief in the night. He'll show up when they least expect Him to arrive. Amid all this difficult conversation, He pointed out that there are a few that have remained faithful. They've done right in spite of others. Those He will protect because they are worthy.

The Reward:

He promised a reward for those who overcome. He is obviously referring to those who continue to do right in spite of the influence of others. Those who continue to live, do and behave themselves as they should in spite of the bad influences in their lives. They have chosen to follow God's Word, not necessarily God's people. The danger that often arises is that we get our eyes focused on the people instead of the Word. God's Word is the most important guide for us to follow. He promises not to blot their name out of the book of life. In fact, He even claims to confess their name before His Father and the angels. In spite of the failures of those around us, and our own failures as long as we strive to do right and follow him he will reward us greatly.

The Church at Philadelphia

The church at Philadelphia is again at church located in what is now modern day Turkey, and is described here in the book of Revelation again he speaks to the works of this church.

The Good:

This church has a testimony before the Lord that she is a working church. Just the mention of the fact that this church is working is again remarkable. God has given each church a work to do. It is up to each church to find that work and do it for God! The fact that this church keeps the word in spite of the fact they have little strength in order to do so. It seems quite important to the Savior that a church work. The major part of the "works" is keeping the Word of God. This is a very difficult task for all Christians at all times while here on earth, we will forever struggle with the battle between what we want to do and what the Word instructs us to do. It seems the lessons learned through these churches is that we should strive to do as the Word of God instructs us to do and not follow our own will or the will of others but that of God's.

The Bad:

It seems that the bad of this church is that of people coming into the synagogue who claimed to be Jews, but are not they are liars, in fact. God refers to them as part of the synagogue of Satan. It is often misunderstood that Jews are simply a genetic race of people, but in relation to God and His Word the Jews are much more than that. This term refers to those people who chose to follow God and His ways. The term Jews were not simply a people genetically connected to Israel; it seems in this case that there are a group of people in this church whether genetically affiliated with Israel or religiously they simply follow God. The people He is singling out are those not following God. They were liars. In verse nine of chapter 3 Jesus stated that He will make them come to worship Him. We are told that every knee shall bow. Even those who reject Jesus will one

day bow down before Him.(Philippians 2:9-11) This is when the world will know that God loved everyone, even those who rejected Him were loved!

The Fix:

In Jesus's mind, the fix is quite simple. Not really easy for us to do but simple in concept. He simply mentions the word patience. Patience in this use of the word refers to the constant doing of right. It seems that he is instructing us here to consistently do right in spite of any influences to the contrary. He simply wants us to continue doing what we're supposed to do. He then finishes with the mindset of holding fast or continuing to do what's right to do. The reason He gave for the need to do this is because He is coming quickly. A good word to describe that term quickly is suddenly or by surprise. Jesus reminds us that He Is coming soon and with that comes the knowledge that we need to always be prepared for His arrival.

The Reward:

The reward that Jesus promises to this church is a promise to those who overcome or continue throughout. He said He will make them, "a pillar in the temple of my God". That term "pillar" means a permanent column. The impression given here is that God will make him a permanent fixture in His temple. It is not clear what is meant by this, but it certainly sounds special. Those who choose to overcome are also promised a new name. Only God knows what this means or what this name is but it sounds like a special bonus. What a special honor for God Almighty to give a name to those who overcome!

The Church of the Laodiceans

The church of the Laodiceans is also another church in the area of modern Day Turkey, that Jesus pointed out as one of the seven that He chooses to deal with.

The Good:

To the Church of the Laodiceans Jesus again recounted that this also is a working church and again He complimented them for this fact, but He quickly transitioned to the issue or the bad that this Church struggled with.

The Bad:

The bad of this church is that in spite of the fact that they were a working church, they were neither hot or cold. In other words they are going through the motions without any heart involved. This can be a devastating position for a church to be in. This resulted from the influence of wealth. Though wealth itself is not a problem or wrong it can often lead one to a sense of complacency. This church's wealth created a sense of pride within the church. Those on the outside did not realize the miserable situation that the church had allowed themselves to fall into in their hearts, they only see that on the outside everything looks good. This describes so many churches that have put the focus of their operation on the wrong thing.

The Fix:

Jesus' fix or solution to the problem is for the church to be zealous and repent. The word zealous means to hotly pursue, and the word repent means to change one's mind. The fix is remarkably simple, but not easy for us to complete. Jesus simply wants the church to

get fired-up and change the way they were thinking and put their focus on a work to please the Lord, not on a work to please man. Oftentimes a church is guilty of focusing on impressing other churches and church leaders instead of focusing on pleasing the Lord to Whom we should be serving.

The Reward:

The reward for correcting the problem that Jesus diagnosed is magnificent. He informed this Church that if they are able to overcome this situation that they had found themselves in and correct the problem that He would allow them to actually sit with Him in His throne. What all that means is not totally understandable to us today. Just think of the magnificence of sitting with Jesus on His throne in Heaven. Though we cannot understand what all this entails, the reality is it truly is a magnificent thought. What a tremendous reward for a church to obtain.

Conclusion:

So many, who have studied the Bible. In their biblical studies many have designated that each of these seven churches refers symbolically to a certain dispensation. Stating that each church represented here pictures or symbolizes a significant segment of time in the history of the church. Though this is in no way an attempt to undermine this approach, there is a remarkable thing stated by our Savior. After each discussion with each church, He consistently repeated the same encouragement. He made the statement, “**He that hath an ear, let him hear what the spirit saith unto the churches**,” the dispensational mindset, if not properly policed could cause one to focus on simply the church that fits the dispensation that that Church is currently in and miss out on some tremendous teaching and commandments that are available to all churches. Jesus wrote this message to individual churches, but He also wrote it to the church as a whole. If we are not careful, we will miss out on this important instruction that Jesus gave to us all.