

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The Church at Sardis

Revelation 3:1-6

5.

The Lord knows all of what goes on in all of His churches, and Sardis is no different. Two of the churches are offered no correction (Rev. 2:9-11; 3:7-13) and in three of the remaining five letters He begins by offering a word of commendation (Rev. 3:2-3, 13, 19). But the Lord does not give any introductory commendation to two churches, one of which is the church in Sardis. The best that can be said of this church is that it has an appearance or a reputation of being alive, but it is in fact dead (v.1b; cf. Luke 13:9; John 15:2a, 6). The life and vitality of a local church, as well as the individual Christian, is displayed in evident righteousness, the fruit, which is produced (Matt 7:15-23; Luke 3:8; cf. Col. 1:3-6).
6.

The presence of the unsoiled few (v.4) characterizes this church as a lazy or decrepit individual who is given a final urging to exercise in order strengthen his body and live (v.2). Christ's warning of His unseen coming ought to shock them out of their stupor and into action (cf. Matt 24:42-51). The Lord is not calling them to figure out something new in light of their predicament, but rather they are to strengthen or re-establish those basic truths and acts of faithfulness which they had been instructed (cf. 2 Pet. 1:10-15). We have been given the kindness of God's Word where He has given to us a record of His dealings with men so that we can look to it and remember what He has done and said and have both appropriate fear (Luke 17:32) and hope (Rom. 15:4). It is not enough for the believers in Sardis simply to know what to do (cf. James 4:17), but they must follow in action and obedience (Matt 7 :21; 2 Tim. 4:7; cf. John 15:10 Rev. 3:10). Repentance is a fundamental part of their instructions; their compromises which allowed them to get into their present stupor, all of which is unfaithfulness to the Lord, is sinful.
7.

Though Sardis had a reputation for good quality garments, only the faithful had truly kept their garments unsoiled (v.4). Their ultimate purity and worthiness is found only in Christ Jesus (cf. Rom. 5:1) but in their present situation the Lord is referring to the faithfulness of the testimony of their actions (cf. James 2:20-23). And whereas a citizen's name could be removed from the rolls of the city, their names would never be removed from the rolls of his heavenly home (cf. Phil 3:20; Heb. 11:10).