

CHRIST APOSTOLIC CHURCH OF PENNSYLVANIA [*Mount of Redemption*]

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BIBLE STUDY

COURSE OUTLINE: REVELATION 3 v 1-13

March 21, 2012,

NEXT WEEK: REVELATION 3:14-22

COURSE TITLE: CHRIST'S MESSAGE TO THE CHURCH AT SARDIS [THE DEAD CHURCH]

3:1 Sardis, the ancient capital of the rich and powerful kingdom of Lydia, was located about 30 miles south of Thyatira. The name – **Sardis means “Escape” perhaps in reference to the loss of its glory from an active to a dead church.** As the glory of the city of Sardis was mostly in the past, so the church there now was virtually **dead in spirit and works.** In spite of its reputation for being active (active), **Sardis was pronounced by Christ as spiritually dead (Rev 3:1).**

With its worship of the Roman **Caesar and of Artemis – the goddess of fertility**, Sardis was infested with sin. Its works were evil and clothes soiled. The spirit has no words of condemnation for this **church that look so good on the outside but was so corrupt on the inside.** INCREDIBLE ! The “seven spirits of God” is another name for the holy spirit; while the “seven stars” are the angels of the seven churches (Rev 1:20)

The lesson derived is very simple. It is unacceptable for a church to focus on ritual or social ceremony (networking) instead of “worship” and service unto the Lord. The idea behind our Christian worship is not to be **ritualistic but to maintain a fellowship or relationship with Christ.** It is either we accept God and His words or reject Him in totality. **As believers we need to get this teachings right and correct our ways.**

3:2 Jesus told the church in Sardis to be **watchful and strengthened (Rev 3:2)** In other words Christ was asking them to “wake up” and “stay awake”. The Lord told them that even though certain aspect of their faith and practice were still alive, He encouraged them (the church) **to be more serious about their worship, study, preaching and ministry.** Jesus was calling on them to carry on spiritual overhauling of their relationship with God.

The lesson inherent in this verse is that for a church to have valid relationship with God, it must backup its doctrines solely on the work of God. When a church receives a great revelation from God, it needs to put that revelation into practice. **If the church doesn't, it will die out.** This is where Sardis church failed. It was just sitting idle and inactive and climaxed into death.

3:3 The church at Sardis was urged to obey the **Christian truth they had when they first believed in Christ.** They were also urged to hold fast to the **sound teaching they had received from the apostles** and repent of their deadness and faithlessness. However, if they choose to be disobedient to these commandments, He warned them that He will come **unexpectedly as a thief to judge them (Rev3:3, Rev 16:15, Matt 24:36 & Matt 25:13),** It is very important for us **as a church to understand that we have a purpose. We have a purpose. We need to wake up and fulfill our assignments before it is too late.**

3:4 The Lord also made mention to **the godly, believing remnants who have not defiled their garments.** They have chosen to remain faithful in spite of all oppositions; they have had victory over sin and have demonstrated practical righteousness. Jesus promised these faithful servants of Christ, **that they and we (genuine Christians) will walk with them in white, for we are worthy (Rev 3:4).**

3:5 In closing this letter, the Lord reassured that His primary goal is for them to overcome and He promised them that He will cloth them in **white raiment which means they will be set apart for God and made pure as they have been faithful and exhibited godly character. (Rev4:4, Rev:11, Rev 7:13, 14)**

The Lord also promised future honor and eternal life for those who stand firm in their faith. He will not blot out their names from **the book of life which is a list of the saved of all ages (Phil 4:3, Rev 20:12, 15). As this book of life also symbolizes God's knowledge of who belongs to Him, all such people will be introduced to the host of heaven as belonging to Christ on the last day (Matt 10:32, 33 & Luke 12:8, 9)**

3:6 Jesus concluded this message that he that hath ear, let him hear what the spirit saith (Rev3:7). Hearing is of utmost importance to us as believers and it is no accident that Jesus keeps talking about hearing. **It does no good to any Christian or church to spend years in the church without change or hearing what the Lord saith.**

CHRIST'S MESSAGE TO THE CHURCH AT PHILADELPHIA

3:7 Philadelphia was located about 30 miles southeast of Sardis. Its names means: **"Brotherly love" and represents the faithful church in all ages.** Although the church at Philadelphia was small in size but **the true judge of the church (Rev 3:14, Rev 6:10) saw them as of good quality (Rev 3:8)** Philadelphia location, vineyards and wine production also made the city **wealthy and commercially important.**

This church in Philadelphia is more like what a modern day church should be than any of the other churches. This church was a working, evangelistic, gospel and bible believing church.

The reference to the key of David (Isaiah 22:22) represents Christ's authority to open the door of invitation to His future kingdom. After the door is opened, no one can close it - **salvation is assured.** Once the door is closed, no one can open it – **judgment is certain.**

3:8 The open door, which no man can shut, refers to an **opportunity for testimonies (witness) and service unto the Lord.** Despite their having little strength, the believers at Philadelphia had obediently kept Christ's word (Rev1:3; Matt 28:20) and had not denied His name. (Matt 10:32, 3; Luke 12:8, 9).

Christ's message to this small church and with little strength was more of commendation and encouragement. The church was **uncompromising with regards to God's word and name. They were also described as a faithful church by Christ and a good quality of a church.**

The lesson derived is that the faithful judge – Jesus knows the level of perfection of our works individually and as churches. Our lives and churches can become the **ideal (model) if we obey God's holy standard.**

3:9 Those who are **of the synagogue of Satan** are probably the unbelieving Jews or Judaizers. Although they claimed to be real jews outwardly (Romans 8:28, 29), they would ultimately be **forced to worship before the church and to acknowledge that Christ had loved His own (Rev 20:4, 6)**

Christ is aware that the unbelieving Jews had consistently and formidably **opposed the Christian faith (Rev 2:9).** The Lord however promised that He would vindicate us – His people immediately and ultimately. Amen (Is 45:23, Romans 14:11).

3:10 The Lord presented a promise in this that He would come and **rapture genuine believers out of the world before the Tribulation period begins.** The hour of temptation is the period of worldwide testing which has not yet occurred (Dan 12:1, Matt 24:21, 29) Christ promised and assured to keep genuine believers from this period of great tribulation. In other words, the real believers will not even enter into this period of history. The tribulation is for the purpose of **trying and judging them that dwell upon the earth, those who are connected to the earth and the system.** Real believers are completely excluded from this term or moment (Phil 3:18-20, 1 Pet 2:11, Rev 6:10, 11:10 & Rev 17:8)

3:11 All Christians must be ready for **Jesus coming (Rev 3:3)** Christ's return with expected suddenness is an incentive **to persevere in faithful service.** Through misconduct, one can lose a crown that has been previously attained (2 John:8). Believers are hereby encouraged to hold unto the truth we have received in the word so that the devil does not cunningly take away our crown like he did to Adam and Eve (1 Cor 10:11-13; Rev3:11-13)

3:12 Christ also promised that the faithful believer will be a pillar – the most stable and permanent part in any building . To be a pillar in the temple of God implies **a prominent place of service in Christ's kingdom (Is 22:23; Luke 19:16-19)** The new Jerusalem is the future dwelling (home) of the people of God (Rev 21:2). We will have **a new citizenship in God's future kingdom. Everything will be new, pure and secure.**

3:13 The Lord concluded as always: He who has ear, let him hear what the spirit is saying. Openness to the truths of the word of God is a necessity for the understanding the special destiny of the overcoming Christian.

Study Notes