

Revelation 3 – Message to the Churches

By Holly Effiom

VV1-6

Church	Description of Jesus	Good works for Jesus' name sake	Bad works	Prescription	Judgment	Reward
Sardis	He who has the 7 Spirits of God and the 7 stars		So-called "Living church" but actually a dead church	Remember how you received, heard, became faithful and become faithful again; Look for and strengthen the few that still have life in them; Repent	Jesus Himself will appear as a thief and take what you have (Matt 24:43)	Those who remain faithful will get to walk with Jesus in white, along with those who repent; their name will not be blotted out of the book of life, and Jesus will confess his name before His Father and His angels.

How does Jesus describe Himself to this church?

What is it to say you are or believe one thing and yet you say or live something else?

What was the problem with the church of Sardis?

What works did Jesus see Sardis performing?

If you are a hypocrite do you actually believe what you are saying?

If you don't believe something, do you truly live by it?

Is the fix to this problem to start doing works? What does Jesus tell Sardis to do to fix the problem?

What will happen if Sardis doesn't follow Jesus' prescription? What happens to those who do?

What is it to walk with Jesus in white?

How does the way Jesus described Himself apply to this message to Sardis?

LESSON: Hypocrisy = Faithlessness

To say one thing and do another is hypocrisy. The church of Sardis had the name of "living church" but is actually dead and because of this hypocrisy, no commendable works were being performed by this church.

Interestingly, Jesus views the performance of works as a sign of life, not just membership in the church. Note, this is *not* to say that the church of Sardis wasn't "doing" stuff, they just weren't doing it for the glory of Jesus Christ.

What then is significant about "works"? James explained that works serve as external evidence of the internal phenomena of faith working within an individual's life, Jas 2:14-20.

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In Sardis, people were saying they were full of faith and “doing’ things that would convince their fellow-churchgoers of the lie. And, we know it was indeed all a lie because these very same people live in a manner that belie their faith. And, this is just what hypocrisy is – unbelief... faithlessness.

Jesus mentions that there are some individuals within the church of Sardis who have not sullied their garments in the sins of the church, and He promises those who repent and overcome, He will not blot their name out of the book of life. Is the “church of Sardis” written in the book of life, or individual names? To whom is this message written?

Jesus describes Himself as He who has the 7 Spirits of God and the 7 stars to this church. He is letting this church, who exists for the external, understand that He sees past the surface and knows that there is no substance inside... There is no “there” there.

VV7-13

Church	Description of Jesus	Good works for Jesus’ name sake	Bad works	Prescription	Judgment	Reward
Philadelphia	He that is holy; He that is true; He that has the key of David; He that opens and no one shuts; He that shuts and no one opens	In weakness still remain faithful to the word of God and have not denied His name; Continued to wait on God.		Continue in faithfulness		Will keep from the great tribulation; Will be a pillar in the temple of God forever, and never have to leave again; Will write the name of God, and the New Jerusalem, and Jesus’ new name on him or her.

How does Jesus describe Himself to this church?

What are the works that Jesus has observed of this church?

Is this a young, vibrant church? If so, or not, how do you know?

What is the synagogue of satan?

What will Jesus do to the Jews who are members of this synagogue?

What promise is Jesus making to those of this church? Has Jesus made this promise to ANY other church?

What warning does Jesus give to this church?

Is it possible for a Christian to lose his or her salvation?

What does Jesus promise those who have overcome?

What is it to have the name of God written upon you?

LESSON: Faithfulness = Faithfulness

What is it about the Philadelphia church that makes Jesus promise them that they will not have to go through the great tribulation? They have little strength, but they are faithful to keep the word of the Lord and rely upon His name. I get the sense that this is a “mature” church – they have come through many battles and still rely on Jesus’ name in any challenge that arises. They may not be as nimble as the younger, more vibrant churches, but they are committed and faithful to the cause of Jesus Christ, no matter how “old-fashioned” their approach.

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Notice, even though this church is tried and true, with years of battle experience, Jesus still feels the need to warn them to hold on tight to what they have and remain faithful, “...that no man take your crown...” Why would Jesus issue such a warning if it is not possible for your salvation to be stolen, or rather, for you to walk away from so great a salvation? No Christian, nor any church, can rest of his or her laurels. As you can see from the messages to the other churches, you can focus so much in one area, and satan comes around and attacks from another angle. *The war ain't over 'til it's over.*

Jesus' promise to those who overcome and make it to the end is that they will become pillars in the temple of God, in the new Jerusalem, and will never have to leave it again. What a marvelous promise! Imagine those times when you're enjoying yourself with a bunch of your Christian brothers and sisters, and you just don't want to say good-night, or good-bye. Your time in God's presence will never have to end. And even more, everyone will know that you belong to God, and to the new Jerusalem, and to Jesus, your Savior.

Jesus describes Himself as He that has the key to David – He that opens and no man shuts; and shuts and no man opens. This phrase is from a promise of God to Eliakim, the son of the high priest, Hilkiah, in which he is made governor over the whole house of the king; and how that position carries all the glory and responsibilities of his father's house. Jesus has all the authority, glory, and power to perform on the promises He's made to this church and all the others. It is incumbent on the church to live out its mission with this confidence until the very end.

Rev 3:14-22

Church	Description of Jesus	Good works for Jesus' name sake	Bad works	Prescription	Judgment	Reward
Laodicea	The faithful and true witness; the beginning of the creation of God.		Lukewarm toward Jesus, because of wealth and attitude that you don't need the salvation of Jesus Christ.	Repent; be zealous for Jesus; use your wealth to invest in the kingdom of Jesus Christ so that you might see your own wretchedness	Spewed out of the body of Jesus Christ	Sit in Jesus' throne.

How does Jesus describe Himself to this church?

What are the works of the church of Laodicea?

What does it mean to be neither cold nor hot? Is lukewarm a good thing to Jesus? Why or why not?"

What has made this church lukewarm?

What is this church's condition from Jesus' perspective? What does Jesus advise them to do?

Why is Jesus being so blunt with this church, and with all the others?

What is Jesus telling, this and the other churches, about Himself? What is His desire toward them?

What will happen to those who follow His advice and overcome?

What is it to sit in Jesus' throne?

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LESSON: Trust in riches = Faithlessness

Some time ago, I did a study in Leviticus in which we analyzed the difference between a symptom and a disease. A symptom is the external evidence of the disease that is working internally. So, when considering a cold – the coughing, sniffing, and sneezing are not the disease in and of themselves, though these *symptoms* give the message that the common cold disease is working inside the body, and to go the other way and don't touch anything that that person has touched, if you want to remain healthy.

In discussing the church of Sardis, we looked at works and faith, and said that “works” are the external evidence of the “faith” that is working internally.

In Leviticus, God used the disease of leprosy and its symptoms to teach us about the nature of sin – He taught us how to recognize its symptoms, how to isolate those who are ill to protect the community, and aggressively treat the illness.

In these letters to the churches, Jesus is sounding the alarm that there's the disease of faithlessness, sin, at work in the churches. The symptom manifested in Laodicea is a trust in riches; and trusting-in-riches makes the church ambivalent, neither cold nor hot... distasteful and *useless*. The symptoms manifested in the other churches is giving up on your first love, giving in to fear, being licentious, submitting to idolatry, and being hypocritical. Jesus is calling out the church to aggressively treat this illness; and if it doesn't, the church will find *itself* on the receiving end of the impending judgment.

Jesus describes Himself as the true and faithful witness to this church. John described Him as the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, the Prince of the kings of the earth. And, Paul wrote that Christians, the church, was predestined to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ; and that Jesus – the first born of the dead, Rev 2:5 – Is the first born of many brothers, Rom 8:29.

When people look at the church do they see the resemblance to Jesus Christ? Do we look like a faithful witness, or live as though our Brother is the first born of the dead or the Prince of all the kingdoms of the earth? Our purpose as a church is to emulate and reflect Jesus' image, and serve our Lord and Savior. The sin of faithlessness keeps the church from being conformed to the very image of the God who created us.

In embarking on a study of the Revelations 2-3, the messages to the seven churches in Asia, we are reminded of the manner in which Jesus began this book in chapter 1. The first thing Jesus did was to re-introduce Himself, His Father, and the Holy Spirit to the faithful church; reminding John that He is no longer acting in the capacity of a son – Son of man or Son of God. His Father handed over all dominion to Him, to act in the capacity of God Almighty. So, everything He was about the say carried the authority and power of the word of God.