

The Seven Churches - Part III

Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea

3:1-22

Introductory Notes

- These are messages from Christ to literal churches that existed as John wrote.
- Basic structure of each message:
 - Description of Christ
 - Commendation
 - Condemnation and Warning
 - Exhortation and Promise

Outline

- Message to Church of Sardis - 3:1-6
- Message to Church of Philadelphia - 3:7-13
- Message to Church of Laodicea - 3:14-22

Notes on the Message to Sardis

- Sardis was a wealthy city that sat on a major trade route.
- Description of Christ - vs. 1
 - Having seven stars and seven Spirits - shows the status and authority of Christ
- Commendation
 - There is nothing positive to be noted in Christ's message
- Condemnation and Warning - vs. 1-3
 - There is definitely a change in tone in the message to Sardis. In this church the good were not the majority as seems likely in the previous churches, even Pergamos.
 - On the surface this appeared to be a good and active church. Christ sees through this facade to the reality.
 - Though the majority of this church was in the wrong, there is still a portion that is true that Christ appeals to (vs. 4).
- Exhortation and Promise - vs. 4-6
 - The faithful few in this church are exhorted to remain faithful
 - Verse 5 is not teaching that we can lose our salvation, but rather that once our names are entered into Heaven's rolls they will never be erased.
- Church period possibly described - A.D. 1517-1800
- Application for today: Perception is not reality - God knows the true heart.

Notes on the Message to Philadelphia

- Philadelphia was a center of Greek language and culture amongst the “barbarians” that surrounded it.
- Description of Christ - vs. 7
 - The description points to Christ as the active and powerful High Priest
- Commendation - vs. 8-9
 - This church is likely the best of the bunch. Christ speaks little of its state but rather of the blessings and opportunities it could enjoy.
 - vs. 8 - What’s the door opened to? Theories include a deeper understanding of Scripture and a metaphor for an opportunity.
 - vs. 9 - even their enemies will come to worship through them
- Condemnation and Warning
 - There is nothing negative to be said about this church
- Exhortation and Promise - vs. 10-12
 - vs. 10 - “hour of temptation” refers to the Tribulation, so here we find one reference to the church being absent during that period.
 - vs. 11 - “quickly” means suddenly and not soon
- Church period possibly described - A.D. 1800-1900
- Application for today: Blessing and favor belong to those that stay true to God.

Notes on the Message to Laodicea

- Laodicea was a thriving city whose economy centered on wool trade, especially a black variety. To give you an idea of how prosperous this city was, after being leveled by an earthquake in A.D. 60 they rebuilt their own city with no outside aid. It’s mentioned in Colossians 2:1 and 4:15.
- Description of Christ - vs. 14
 - The description points to Christ as supreme
- Commendation
 - There is nothing positive noted in this church
- Condemnation and Warning - vs. 15-17
 - This church just is - it’s not progressing or regressing
 - vs. 17 - focuses on the externals and not the internals
- Exhortation and Promise - vs. 18-22
 - vs. 18 - eye salve - Laodicea was famous for an eye-powder
 - vs. 20 - compare to vs. 8
 - vs. 20 - Note that Christ is *outside* the church
- Church period possibly described - A.D. 1900-present
- Application for today: Be careful not to have Church or Christianity without Christ.