

Smn D&R07 Sardis

Daniel and Revelation Series

Sermon 7

Sardis (The Church of Hypocrites)

Text: [Rev 3:1-6](#)

In our last sermon on Revelation we looked at Thyatira, the church of the Dark Ages that replaced the simplicity of the Gospel of Jesus Christ with the trimmings and trappings of Babylonian paganism.

This was the church that forbade the reading of the Bible and burned people at the stake for even owning a Bible. For over a thousand years this monster kept the people in darkness, and put to death about 50 million people, but toward the end of this time the Morning Star emerged over the horizon to herald the dawning of a new day. Faithful men like Wycliffe, Tyndale, John Hus and Martin Luther brought the simple truths of Scripture to the people in their own languages so that the light of heaven was finally able to shine through the darkness. This church covered the period during which the Christian Church was the major political and social force in the known world, the approximately 1000-year period from around 538 to the time of the Reformation.

This latter time brings us to the church in Sardis. Let's read the passage.

Identification: 1:16, 20. He holds the angels of each of the seven churches in his hands. This does not seem as pointed as with other churches, but it shows His total interest in them. These are His churches.

Commendation: None. Why not? What is the one thing Christ hated when on earth? To the adulterer he said, Go and sin no more, to the thief he said, You *shall* be with me in paradise. But no hypocrite was ever given such assurance. Woe to you, He said, Hypocrites.

Rebuke: To this church He says, I know your deeds; you have a reputation for being alive, but are dead. This is a description of hypocrisy. You have a reputation for one thing, but are something else. How could this be? This is the church that follows the Reformation. What went wrong? I think we can begin to see what went wrong if we look at what was going on in the world at that time.

As Protestantism flourished, so did the freedom for people to express themselves more confidently, to study for themselves and develop new ideas without fear of the flames. This was a time that became known as The Enlightenment. Ideas flourished, philosophies were born, the sciences were developed, especially the science of Geology, which was to have a profound impact on the religious thought of man, and which I will speak more of when we look at Philadelphia. Machines and labour-saving devices were developed and the Industrial Revolution changed the face of the world forever.

Of all the events that took place during this era, perhaps the most dramatic was the French Revolution, where, for the first time a peasant class overthrew the ruling class. They replaced the plough with the guillotine, and replaced the worship of God with the worship of Reason.

This was the generation that left behind them the Pre-Modern era and moved into the era of Modernism that was to last until the 1960's. The age of rationalism, the belief that natural laws were responsible for the existence of the earth and the life on it.

All this had an effect on the church; it began to question the Scriptures and look to "science" to provide answers as to the origins of the earth. Before the late 1700s people believed in absolute values. Things were right or wrong according to the way God defined right and wrong. Knowledge came from revelation. This was the Pre-modern period. In the Pre-modern world God is God. Truth is what God has revealed.

But the Enlightenment, the Industrial Revolution, the development of scientific knowledge brought with them the modern era. In the Modern world knowledge came from reason (logic), not from revelation. In other words, God does not reveal Himself, science defines Him. In the Modern world God is what we make Him to be. Truth is what we understand to be reasonable or logical. If we can prove it scientifically it is true; if we can't, then it remains in the realm of philosophy or religion.

Thus the church lost its faith in the Word of God. They believed in God, but denied the power of God. The Apostle Paul, must have known such a time would come because in [2 Timothy 3:1-5](#) he wrote, *“But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be...having a form of Godliness, but denying its power.”*

This is why they were seen as hypocrites. They claimed to believe in God, and made great pretence at religion. They were very pious, yet they did not believe God’s Word. The church had nothing to offer; it had a reputation of being alive, but was dead. That was the church in Sardis.

Admonition: Wake up!

Warning: verse [3b](#). Thyatira was told to hold on until Christ would come ([2:25](#)). That was the first hint of the fact that Christ would return – a promise. But Sardis is given something more specific. *“I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.”* ([2Peter 3:10](#)) – a warning.

Promise: [v.4](#) A 3-fold promise.

- A) White,
- B) Book of Life,
- C) Acknowledge his name.

White: [Isa 1:18](#) (OT echo), [Rev 3:5, 18; 4:4; 6:11; 7:9, 13, 14](#). Righteousness of Christ. [Luke 8:27, 35](#). Dressed.

Book: [Ex 32:32, 33](#); (Ps 69:28 –omit); [Dan 7:10, 12:1](#);
[Rev 20:12](#)

Acknowledgement: [Matt 10:32](#). Have you ever...?

Time Frame: Don't want to be too exact here because there are several dates that could apply to both beginning and ending. This is primarily the time of the Reformation until the beginning of the "Time of the End". A fairly short period of time. Post reformation until the "time of the end". That which remains.

What lessons are there for us here?

1. The danger of hypocrisy.
2. The need to be ready for Christ to come any time.
3. To be dressed in white. (a wedding dress).
4. To be found in the Book.
5. To acknowledge Christ.

Let us pray.