

Theme: The church must be alive and alert, not living off past faith and deeds, but nurturing a vital, continuing walk with Jesus and opposition to Satan.

I. Intro - King Croesus

- A. King Croesus - wealthiest man in world; goes to oracle
- B. "Attack Persia?" - "Do it and destroy a great empire"
- C. He loses; retreats to 'impregnable' wealthy Sardis
- D. Cyrus comes unnoticed; see soldier take secret way up
- E. No watch on the walls; city falls without fight
- F. (Same thing again in 218BC with Antiochus the Great)
- G. Isaac Watts - False greatness
"Thus mingled still with wealth and state,
Croesus himself can never know;
His true dimensions and his weight
Are far inferior to their show."

II. Jesus Speaks To His Church In Sardis

- A. The Church in Sardis
To the angel of **the church in Sardis** write: Rev 3:1
 - 1. 35 miles SE of Thyatira; 60 miles inland of Smyrna
 - 2. Very wealthy; lot of gold in local river; King Croesus
 - 3. Steep bluff; seemed impregnable - but see intro!
 - 4. In decline in Roman period; living off reputation
 - 5. Huge Artemis Temple to equal Ephesus; incomplete

- B. Jesus the Sovereign One speaks to His church
To the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. Revelation 3:1
 - 1. Jesus holds 7 stars (angels - Rev 1:20) in His hand
 - 2. He holds the seven spirits of God in His hands
 - a. Unusual phrase occurs in Rev 1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6
 - b. Refers to the Holy Spirit (Trinity in Revelation 1:4-5)
 - c. Seven - number of fullness and perfection - symbolic
 - 3. The angels and the Spirit are with Jesus - listen up!
- C. The One speaking has the angels & the Holy Spirit with Him, and the church must be alert & listen to His voice.

III. Jesus' Word for the Church In Sardis

- A. A word of rebuke to a dead church
To the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. **I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead.** Rev 3:1
 - 1. This is shocking - no word of commendation
 - 2. They have a great reputation - but they are dead!
 - 3. Like the city of Sardis, they are living on past glories
 - 4. Their current deeds don't match their reputation
 - 5. They are the opposite of Jesus
 - a. He was dead and is alive (Rev 1:18; 2:8)
 - b. They were alive but are now dead!

6. A Christian and a church can not live off of their past walk and faith - this is spiritual death.

B. An urgent call to awaken and be alert

Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God. Revelation 3:2

1. A mixing of metaphors - wake up you are asleep

- a. (Paul has the same thing in Ephesians 5:14)
- b. Don't press it; let the strength of words hit home

2. Awake - be alert, keep watch

- a. Word usually means "be alert; keep watch"
- b. Often used to keep spiritual watch, aware of enemy

Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Could you men not **keep watch** with me for one hour?" he asked Peter. ⁴¹ "**Watch** and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak." Matthew 26:40-41

I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. ³⁰ Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.

³¹ So **be on your guard!** Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears. Acts 20:29-31

Be self-controlled and **alert**. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 1 Peter 5:8

- c. Like the city of Sardis, the church there had fallen into a complacent slumber, not recognizing danger all around
- d. We are always in spiritual warfare - the church can not afford to fall into a complacent slumber, unaware of the dangers all around

3. Strengthen what remains and is about to die

- a. A few things are still alive and alert - but barely
- b. No time to waste - it will be too far gone soon

4. I have found your deeds incomplete

- a. An allusion to the unfinished Temple of Artemis
- b. Like Sardis, you started well but have dropped out
- c. You have lost your passion, stopped walking with me and fighting the spiritual war, and have fallen asleep

C. A call to repent

Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you. Revelation 3:3

- 1. The consistent call - repent!
- 2. Repentance again includes remembering (2:4-5)
- 3. They are to repent by remembering the Word given to us, receiving and obeying it.
- 4. We think the solution to spiritual boredom and slumber is finding something new; Jesus says it is cured by returning to the simple Gospel.
- 5. If they do not repent and awaken Jesus will come like a thief in judgment on them
 - a. Same word for 'wake' - be alert watchful
 - b. Analogy of thief coming on those not watchful is based on Jesus' words in Matthew 24:42-44 - same Greek words

- c. But this is not the final return of Christ, but a temporal return to this church in judgment

D. The result of spiritual slumber - sinful living

Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy. Revelation 3:4

1. Soiled their clothes - walked in sin and compromise
2. Dire situation - only a few not doing this
3. When our walks with Jesus grow cold and we fall asleep spiritually, we lose the strength necessary to resist sin
4. A vital spiritual life in the past is no protection from sin in the present!
5. These few walk with Christ and live in a manner worthy of Him and His Gospel

E. The root of spiritual vitality - justification by faith

He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels. Revelation 3:5

1. The overcomer - dressed in white - justification
These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Rev 7:14
 - a. Robes are white because washed in the blood
 - b. We receive white robes by faith - not works
2. Name never blotted out of book of life - no matter what the world may do, our salvation is secure with God

3. The world may deny us, ridicule us, castigate us, but Jesus will acknowledge us before the Father
4. The Gospel gives us power to live in holiness before God and our culture, resisting Satan, sin, and the world system
5. We overcome the world by being born of God - not by works but by faith!
Everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. 1 John 5:4

IV. Applying the Word

A. Have I embraced Christ by faith?

1. We can not work work our way to spiritual life
2. Salvation is not found in our church or what our parents did - but in Christ alone!
3. Have you embraced Christ by faith?
4. Look to Him for salvation today!

B. Do I have a current, vital, spiritual walk with Christ?

1. We can not live off of a past walk with Christ
2. We must be being filled with the Spirit day by day (Ephesians 5:18)
3. Hear what the Spirit is saying to the church - shake off spiritual slumber!
4. Hear what the Spirit is saying to the church - renew your walk with Christ

5. Hear what the Spirit is saying to the church - draw near to God in prayer
6. Hear what the Spirit is saying to the church - be alert and do spiritual warfare for our church, your brothers and sisters, your family, your city!

C. Come to the Table of Life

1. Here we see our source of life - Christ!
2. Here we freshly receive God's grace and renew our faith
3. Here we are moved upon by the Spirit to renew our walks

Sardis - The Dead Church

Revelation 3:1-6
March 29, 2017
Communion
Hebrews 13:20-21

Teaching keywords: correction; endurance; passion for Christ; spiritual warfare; sanctification

May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep,²¹ equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. Hebrews 13:20–21

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