

## Chapter 3

V. SARDIS (V.1). 'The Reformation (Protestant) Church' (1517-1700sAD).

- Sardis was the capital of Lydia, and one of the oldest and most important cities of Asia Minor. It was the center of the 'carpet industry', and was noted for its wealth. Coins were first minted there. City was destroyed by an earthquake.
  - In 1382AD, Wycliffe translated the Bible into English. It was not widely circulated, but it reached the people, and was one of the main factors in paving the way for the Reformation.
  - Then in 1454AD, John Gutenberg invented the Printing Press - and his first printed book was the Bible. Before this, the cost of a Bible could be a year's wage, but now, a Bible could be purchased at a reasonable price. And they were plentiful.
  - It is not known who founded the church in the city.
- A. 'Saith he that hath the seven spirits of God'. Since 7 is the Biblical number of completion, this is speaking of the fulness and power of the Holy Spirit operating in and through the life of Christ.
- B. Commendation:
- a. Some believe the church receives no commendation, whatsoever.
  - b. Others: 'I know thy works'. But even these are questioned according to v.2.
- C. Condemnation:
- 'A name that thou livest, and art dead'. (Living name, but dead church.) The Reformation Church was true to the letter of truth (Christ) but far from the spirit of Christ. **Note:** It's been said, 'there's nothing deader than a dead church, especially if it testifies to being a Pentecostal Church'. **Ex.** It's like a man dying of thirst in the desert seeing a well off in the distance, only to find, upon arrival, it to be dry.
- D. Counseled to do six things (vs.2,3).
- a. 'Be watchful'. In speaking of the end-time (Matt.24:42), Jesus said, 'Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come'.  
'Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation' (Matt.26:41).  
'Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong' (1 Cor.16:13).
  - b. 'Strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die'. The Reformation was not a return to the Apostolic church, yet, some of its doctrines were rediscovered. (1) Authority of the Word of God, (2) Justification by faith, (3) Free access to the Bible, and (4) Priesthood of believers.
    - 'I have not found thy works perfect before God' (v.2). **Note:** Many have stumbled over the meaning of 'perfect works', which, actually, are works that measure up to Bible standards. (The Reformers lacked brotherly love, personal holiness and spiritual understanding.)
  - c. Remember – explore the past
  - d. Hold fast – protect spiritual gains already made
  - e. Repent – correct mistakes
  - f. Watch – stay on guard against evil.
- E. Christ gives warning (v.3). 'If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee'. (The Lord says these same words to every church and to every professing believer - then and now.) **Notice:** A few remained faithful. They refused to 'go along to get along'. They continued in the ways of the Lord.
- F. 'They shall walk with me in white': for they are worthy'. **Note:** White raiment (v.5) is a reference to the 'righteousness of Christ', with which we are clothed when born again.

- G. 'I will not blot out his name out of the book of life: but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels'. Questions: (1) What is the 'book of life'? (2) Does this book contain the names of all living individuals? or (3) Does it contain the names of only those who are spiritually alive; saved?

**Note:** 'The Book of Life' is a figurative expression originating from the ancient customs of keeping genealogical records (Neh.7:5,64; 12:22,23), and of registering citizens for various purposes (Jer.22:30). Too, it seems God is represented as having a 'record' of all His creation. To be 'expunged' (taken out) from the 'Book of Life' is to be removed from God's divine favor and come to an untimely death. **Ex.** Moses pled with God that he might die, rather than that Israel be destroyed (Exo.32:32; Ps.69:28). In the New Testament, the 'Book of Life' refers to the 'roster of the righteous' who are to inherit eternal life (Phil.4:3; Rev.13:8), from which the saved (faithful) are not to be blotted out (Rev.3:8).

- To the overcomer, Jesus says, 'I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels'. This is not referring to the angels of the Father, but to angels of overcomers.

#### VI. PHILADELPHIA (3:7-13) 'The Revived Church' (1700-1900AD).

- Word 'Philadelphia' literally means 'brotherly love'. **Note:** The Greek King of Pergamos, named Attalus Philodelphus, founded the city in 189BC. It became an independent Christian city in the first century AD, and remained such until the end of the 14th century, a period of almost 1500 years, at which time it was conquered by the Turks.

#### A. The four-fold manner in which Christ reveals Himself:

- a. 'Holy'. Throughout the Bible He calls His children to 'holiness' and 'holy living', saying, 'Be ye holy; for I am holy'.
- b. 'True'. He is the 'genuine'; the 'Truth' (Jn.14:6).
- c. He has the 'key of David', which speaks of authority. He holds the keys. He is in control.
- d. He opens, and no man can shut. He shuts, and no man can open. And He says, 'I have set before thee an open door, which no man can shut' (v.8).
  - i. Likely, a door of opportunity for witnessing and proclaiming the Gospel to the lost of the world.
  - ii. Or possibly a door to a greater knowledge of the Scriptures. **Note:** With the 'revival era' of that day came the great missionary movement. What God opens, only He can shut.
- e. 'For thou hast a little strength'. **Note:** Smyrna was a 'suffering' church. Philadelphia is a 'weak' church. But notice the next part:
- f. 'And hast kept my word, and not denied my name'. Not only believed the 'word', but obeyed it. **Note:** In a day when there was a denial of the inspiration of the Scriptures and the deity of Christ, this church remained true to the Lord by proclaiming Christ to be the promised Messiah, and, He died a substitutionary death for sinners.
- g. 'Them of the synagogue of Satan' (v.9). **Note:** In Thyatira, Jezebel was allowed to teach (her word). Sardis had separated from Jezebel's word, but had substituted it with doctrines of men (man's word). Here, it's God's Word.
- h. 'Say they are Jews, and are not'. To falsely pretend to be of Christ is to play the hypocrite.
- i. 'Worship before thy feet'. Although these opponents of 'truth' fancied themselves to be superior to God's humble people, Christ would force them to humble themselves at the very feet of the overcomers.

- B. **Condemnation:** None. (Rom.8:1)

- C. **Christ's promise to those of Philadelphia:**
  - a. Vindication (v.9). Satan tried to bring 'legalism' (a system of Judaism) into the body of Christ, which was opposed to the truth. Not true Old Testament theology.
  - b. Preservation. Kept 'from' the hour of temptation (tribulation), not 'through' it.
- D. **Counsel** (v.11). 'Behold, I come quickly (reference to rapture): hold fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown'. **Note:** To turn from the truth is to lose your crown.
- E. **Notice 'three things' necessary for a church to be spiritual:**
  - a. Prayer
  - b. Evangelism (Missions)
  - c. Bible Teaching
- F. **Challenge** (v.12):
  - a. 'He that overcometh will I make a pillar in the Temple of my God, and he shall go no more out'. Amen! Always in God's presence. Among the redeemed forever!
  - b. Write upon him:
    - i. Name of my God (ownership).
    - ii. Name of new Jerusalem (citizenship).
    - iii. Name of Jesus (a new name unfolded in Revelation).

#### VII. **LAODICEA** (3:14-22). 'The Apostate (Lukewarm) Church'. (1900-Rapture)

According to 'International Standard Bible Encyclopedia', Antiochus II (261-246BC) founded the city of Laodicea, and named it for his wife, Loadike, or Laodice. Laodicea was a wealthy center of industry, famous for its black wool and Phrygian powder (used upon the eyes). Too, a great school of medicine was located there. City was destroyed by Moslems in the Middle Ages, and the site today, of this once wealthy city, is a mass of ruins.

The word 'Laodicea' means 'Custom of the people', 'mob-rule', or 'will of the masses'.

- A. **Christ's description of Himself** (v.14):
  - a. 'Amen'. He who establishes all of God's promises. He is the 'Last Word', the 'Ultimate Authority', and the 'Finality of all things'. **Note:** This is the only time in Scripture this title is used as a proper name.
  - b. 'Faithful and true witness'. In the closing days, the Church will be unfaithful and untrue. But Christ is seen as being the 'faithful and true witness'. **Note:** All of God's witnesses have failed at some time, but Christ, never.
  - c. 'The beginning of the creation of God'. Jesus is not the first of God's creation, as some cults and false teachers advocate. He is the 'beginner of creation' (Jn.1:3; Col.1:16,17). Too, He is Head of the 'new creation' (II Cor.5:17).
- B. **Commendation:** The only church upon which Christ could find nothing, not one thing to commend. (A sad commentary.)
- C. **Condemnation** (v.15):
  - 'Neither cold nor hot' (Lukewarm).
    - a. 'Cold'. Lifeless. Engaged in active opposition to Gospel of Christ.
    - b. 'Hot'. Zealous of good works. On fire for God. Love God with all their being.
    - c. The Church was 'Lukewarm, indifferent, and nauseating'; with a temperature the same as that of the world. Their condition resulting from leaders preaching and teaching what the people wanted to hear.

**Note:** They were more interested in:

- a. Social action than Gospel action.
- b. Reformation than Transformation.
- c. Planning and Playing than Praying.
  - Because of their 'lukewarmness', Jesus says, 'I will spew thee out of my mouth'. ('I will spit you out'.) **Note:** Copied from a writer who teaches 'Eternal Security': 'Spitting the church out of Christ's mouth has no reference to loss of salvation, but removal from a place of witness'.
  - When believers are raptured, the Laodicean Church will remain on earth, spewed out by Christ to endure the Tribulation.
- They are deceived about themselves (v.17). Because of their material possessions, great numbers, popularity with the multitudes, beautiful buildings(?), etc., they could say, 'Why do we need revival, or the power of God, or His holiness - 'we're doing fine'.
- But Jesus sees them in a different light. 'Thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked'. How sad! They thought everything was going well because they measured themselves with the measuring rod of the world. But Christ saw things differently.

**D. Jesus gives Counsel (v.18).**

- a. 'Buy of me'. (This raises a question in the minds of many. Jesus had said they were 'poor'. Now, He asks them to buy something. How can this be? (Answer: Salvation is not purchased through man's efforts. Therefore, the poor can pay the price by humbling themselves, calling upon the name of the Lord, and believing (Isa.55:1).
  - i. 'Gold' - represents true faith. (Salvation)
  - ii. 'White raiment' - righteousness, holiness. (Sanctification) **Note:** Some teach that the 'gold' speaks of 'divine righteousness', while 'white raiment' denotes 'practical righteousness'.
  - iii. 'Eye salve' - speaks of spiritual illumination by the Holy Spirit. (Holy Ghost Baptism)
- b. 'I love'. 'I rebuke'. 'I chasten'. (v.19) All because He loves the Church.
- c. 'Be zealous, therefore, and repent'.

**E. Christ's Counsel to individuals' (v.20). Jesus is shut out of the Church. Yet, anyone willing to receive Him is given a special invitation. Think about it: The 'Church Age' began at the resurrection of Jesus and Pentecost, with Christ in the midst of the churches (Rev.1:12). It ends with Him outside, knocking, desiring to be allowed in.**

- a. 'I will come in to him, and will sup with him'. He is a loving, caring, and long-suffering God.
- b. The overcomer will 'sit with me in my throne' (v.21). As the Father's throne is shared by Christ, so Christ shares His throne with believers. And they will rule and reign with Him forever