Chapter 3
Revelation

Chapter 3

To the Church in Sardis

[1] "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. [2] Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God. [3] 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.

[4] 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. [5] 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. [6] He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Rev 3:1-6 (NIV)

The Letter to Sardis

Barclay --700 years before this letter was written Sardis had been one of the greatest cities in the world. Sardis stood in the midst of the plain of the valley of the River Hermus. The wealth of Sardis was legendary.
The original city sat on a plateau over the valley of Hermus. It once was a city of great wealth and as it grew, the city expanded to the foothills around the city. Thus the word Sardis is plural standing for the expanded city.

Solon, the wisest of the Greeks, came on a visit and uttered his famous saying to Croesus: "Call no man happy until he is dead." Solon knew only too well the chances and changes of life which Croesus had forgotten. (Croesus was one of the great kings of Sardis)

Croesus embarked upon a war with Cyrus of Persia which was the end of the greatness of Sardis. A certain Mardian soldier called Hyeroeades had seen a Sardian soldier accidentally drop his helmet over the battlements, and then make his way down the precipice to retrieve it. Hyeroeades knew that there must be a crack in the rock --- a man could climb up. The Sardians had thought themselves too safe to need a guard, and so Sardis fell**. A city with a history like that knew what the Risen Christ was talking about when he said; "Watch."**

Sardis became a Greek culture… in due time, the Romans came… it was a center of the woolen trade… in a.d. 17 it was destroyed by an earthquake.

Twice Sardians were defeated because they were too lazy to watch.
That enervating atmosphere the Christian Church too had lost its vitality and was a corpse instead of a living church.

Barclay --Neither pagan opposition nor heretical and libertinistic excesses threatened this church; it suffered from spiritual dry rot and deadness. It suffered from spiritual dry rot and deadness. Linski

Sardis - Death in Life

MacArthur – light year measurement; illustrates many churches today, they still shine with the reflected light of a brilliant past.

Because the Sardis church was dead, Christ skipped the usual commendation for the moment and went directly to His concerns for it.

3:1-6

Barclay --
The Risen Christ is described in two phrases.

1. He is he who has the seven Spirits of God.
Revelation 1:4 we first see the seven Spirits of God
The 7 spirits signifies the completeness of the gifts of the Spirit and the universality of his presence.
The Lord sends us his Holy Spirit.. For it is the Lord who is "the one having the seven spirits." The seven stars are added to the seven spirits because spiritual life is to be revived. Linski
The Lord sends us his Holy Spirit even as he poured out the Spirit on Pentecost; thus the Lord is "the one having the seven spirits." The seven stars are added to the seven spirits because spiritual life is to be revived.

2. He is he who has the seven stars.
The churches and the angels
The church is the possession of Jesus Christ. Many a time men act as if the Church belongs to them.

Barclay --
Accusation: Spiritually Dead

Linski- The church had the name Christian Church, but its Christian life was dying inwardly, not in its entire membership, for a few persons were still fully alive spiritually.

MacArthur – It was a church dominated by sin, unbelief, and false doctrine. Like the fig tree in Jesus' parable, it bore leaves, but no fruit (Matt. 21:19).

1. Sin is the death of the will
   Habits grow upon one until one can no longer break them.

2. Sin is the death of the feelings
   This does not happen over night.

3. Sin is the death of all loveliness
   Sin takes the lovely and makes it ugly

It is only by the grace of God that we can escape the death of sin.

Effect… of the lifelessness of the church

1. The church at Sardis was untroubled by any heresy.
   There is nothing worse than a state in which a man is orthodox because he is too lazy to think for himself.

2. The church at Sardis was untroubled by any attack from the outside.
   A truly vital church will always be under attack.
   "Woe to you," said Jesus, "when all men speak well of you!" Luke 6:26

MacArthur – what are the danger signs that a church is dying?

When it is content to rest on its past laurels
When it is more concerned with liturgical forms than spiritual reality,
When it focuses on curing social ills rather than changing people's hearts
When it is more concerned with what men think than what God said,
When it is more enamored with doctrinal creeds and systems of theology than with the Word
When it loses its conviction that every word of the Bible is the word of God.

Verse 2 <u>Sardis Watch!</u>

Linski- to be awake when one is aroused; the Lord is arousing the church. Not so much watchful, which make one think of ones enemies? Aroused means wide awake to see the deplorable conditions of the dying church.

Barclay --
No commandment appears more frequently in the New Testament than that to watch.

1. Watchfulness should be the constant attitude of the Christian life.
   Romans 13:11 I Corinthians 16:13

2. Be on watch against the wiles of the devil
   I Peter 5:8

3. Be on watch against temptation
   Matthew 26:41

4. Be on watch for the coming of the Lord
   Matthew 24:42-43 Mark 13:37 I Thessalonians 5:6

5. Watch against false teaching
   Acts 20:29-31

Sardis
The Imperatives of the Risen Lord

3:1-6 continue
Barclay --
1. **Remember**… who you received the gospel.
   Keep on remembering, never allow yourself to forget.. The thrill of first hearing the Good News. **MacArthur –**go back to the truths of the Word of God

2. **Repent**…. One definite action.

3. **Keep**… the commands of the gospel
   Never stop keeping

Sardis
The Faithful Few

Verse 4… a ray of hope
Even in Sardis there are the faithful few.
Sodom – Genesis 18:25 Abijah (Jeroboam son spared) I Kings 14:13
God never abandons his search for the faithful few and they are never lost to his sight in the mass of the wicked.

Verse 4 **Have not soiled their garments….**

MacArthur –"to stain", familiar to church because of the city's wool dyeing industry.

Barclay --

a. In the heathen world no worshipper was allowed to approach a temple of gods with soiled clothes.

b. White garments stands for the profession a man made at baptism.

MacArthur – Garments symbolize character in Scripture (e.g., Isa 64:6 & Jude 23)

> 6 All of us have become like one who is unclean,
> and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; Isaiah 64:6 (NIV)

> 22 Be merciful to those who doubt; 23 snatch others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy, mixed with fear--hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh. Jude 1:22-23 (NIV)

Sardis

The Three Fold Promise

1. Clothed with white raiment

Matthew 13:43 they will shine forth like the son in the Kingdom of their Father.

a. Robes stood for festivity.

Ecclesiastes 9:8 let your garments be always white and let not oil be lacking on your head. The faithful will be guests at the banquet of God.

B. In the ancient world white robes stood for victory. The reward of those who have won the victory.

C. white is the color of purity

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God… Matthew 5:8

D. the resurrection bodies.

2. Their names will not be wiped out of the Book of Life.

In the ancient world the king kept a register of his citizens. When and man committed a crime against he state or died, his name was removed.

3. Jesus will confess their names before God and the angels.

Matthew 10:32-33 Luke 12:8-9

What happened to Sardis?

MacArthur –several decades after John wrote some revival took place.

To the Church in Philadelphia

7 "To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write:

These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What

he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open. [8] I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. [9] I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars--I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you. [10] Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.

[11] I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown. [12] Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name. [13] He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Rev 3:7-13 (NIV)

Philadelphia

Barclay - Philadelphia was the youngest of all the seven cities. Name means one who loves his brother. Attalus ruler of Pergamum named it for his love of his brother Eumenes.

Purpose for city – the center for the diffusion of Greek language and Greek letter in a peaceful means to Lydia and Phrygia. It worked. In A.D. 17 an earthquake came and wiped out Sardis and 10 other cities – tremors went on for years in Philadelphia. For years people lived outside of the city in fear of houses falling due to tremors. Philadelphia also had a number of name changes, but Philadelphia's name was restored. So the people knew what it was like to hold on to a promise and the value of a name.

In later days, it became a very great city. It still holds aloft the banner of the Christian faith. It was a free Greek Christian city amidst a pagan people.

Verse 7

The Risen Christ is called by <u>three great titles</u> – a tremendous claim

1. **Holy** – God is holy because he is different from men. To say that Jesus is holy is to say that he shares the being of God.

2. **True** – Greek, alethinos, which means **real** as opposed to that which is unreal.

3. **Has Key of David** – symbol of authority. See Isaiah 22:20

Old Testament Picture:

> [20] "In that day I will summon my servant, Eliakim son of Hilkiah. [21] I will clothe him with your robe and fasten your sash around him and hand your authority over to him. He will be a father to those who live in Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. [22] I will place on his shoulder the **key to the house of David**; what he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.
>
> Isaiah 22:20-22 (NIV)

Barclay –

Verse 8 & 9 problem of punctuation in that in early Greek manuscripts there was no punctuation at all. So does this go with that which precedes or follows. Barclay goes with precedes.

Open Door

Barclay --

1. Missionary opportunity – Philadelphia was a border town of Lydia, Mysia and Phrygia and founded to spread the Greek culture.
    a. every man need not to go over seas to be a missionary.
    b. reward of work well done is more work to do.
2. The door is Jesus Himself
3. Door to the Messianic community
4. For every man the door of prayer is always open.

Bow down at your feet

Barclay -- much is said in O.T. Isaiah 60:14, 45:14, 49:23 and Zechariah 8:22-23 as well as Gal 6:16 and Romans 9:6-9 in the N.T. The Jewish nation had lost its place in the plan of God and that place has been passed to the church.

Philadelphian Church had emerged trialumphantly true. They man have only a little strength; their resources may be small; but if they are faithful, they will see the dawn of the triumph of Christ.

Verse 10

Linski- You have kept; guard, hold, keep, preserve against loss, damage. This church held completely to the Word – no greater praise can be given to any church. The Word is kept by the power which this word itself supplies and by no other power.

The great promise given to the church in Philadelphia is that in this hour it shall be kept untouched and unharmed by the impending

dangers. The Lord has various forms of reward which he extends variously to individuals, or bodies of people.

Barclay – loyalty has its sure reward. The promise is to those who have practiced the same kind of endurance as Jesus displayed in is earthly life.

The endurance of Jesus Christ supplies us with three things:

1. **example**
2. **inspiration**
3. **guarantee of his sympathy with us. (able to help us)**

Jews divided time into 2 ages

1. **present age – which is wholly bad**
2. **the age to come – which is wholly good**

He who is faithful to Christ will still be safe in his keeping

Verse 11

Barclay – coming of Christ – tow reasons used

1. Warning as in Matthew 24:48-51. Wicked servant took advantage when master was absent.
2. Comfort to the oppressed James 5:8

Hold to what you have – it is not that someone might take it from them, but that God might give it to another who is deserving.
(god has a task for every one… are we doing it, or does he have to give it to another?)

Linski – 1:8 as a thief in the night. Coming quickly repeated 3 times in Rev 22: 7, 12, ,& 20
The word means quickly, soon. This passages is neg. stated = I am making no delay!

We are constantly to look for his coming. "Quickly intends to keep us in constant expectations by shutting out any delay on the Lord's part.

Act 1:7 on day is as a thousand years.

Lose one's crown --- the more we stand, the more we should take heed least we fall. This crown is not merely a degree of heavenly glory, but the glory itself, our place and position in heaven as one of the Lord's victors.

Verse 11

Barclay –

Pillar – a great and honored support such as Peter, James and John were pillars of the church.

Never again will he leave ---a. promise of security B. the goodness we reach in the presence of God.

Write on him---

a. in Philiadelphia, when a priest died after a lifetime of faithfulness, men honored him, by erecting a new pillar in the temple and inscribing his name on it.
b. branding a slave with the initials of his owner
c.. OT picture. Mark of God on the people Numbers 6:22-27

3:7-13
Plamer – fourfold task:

1. first to remain loyal disciples of their Lord
2. then to affirm to the people around them of their own loyalty and trust in the Word and Name of Jesus Christ
3. to live in the realm of His love
4. to welcome the people who will surprise them by responding to this witness.

We Christians are not asked to open the heavy doors, but to walk through doors that the Lord opens.

Two thoughts

1. it does not call for "super Christians, " but rather for garden variety Christians who are experiencing the miracle of the love of Jesus Christ in their own lives and fellowship.
2. the power of love is strongly stated in this letter. Cutting edge Christian fellowship is the fact of belovedness.

MacArthur- 3:12-13

4 Blessings on the one **who overcomes** --- another name for Chirstian.

1. pillar in the temple of God and he will not go out

Pillar – stability, permanence and immovability. Honor – as pillars honored a particular deity in pagan temples.
Will not go out --- heaven was understood as security in eternal glory.

2. Write on him the name of his God. --- ownership, belong to God

3. write name on city --- eternal citizenship.

4. new name --- christ's name = fullness of his person. Will reflect glorious revelation of His person.

Let him hear === claoses all 7 leters. Heed the truths.

Laodicea: The Lukewarm Church 14-22

Romans 9:4-5

the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. [5] Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.

Deut 4:37; 7:7-8

Because he loved your forefathers and chose their descendants after them, he brought you out of Egypt by his Presence and his great strength,

Deut 4:37 (NIV)

[7] The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. [8] But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

Deut 7:7-8 (NIV)

MacArthur:

Yet despite those privileges, Israel's history was one of continual rebellion against God. All through its centuries of disobedience, rebellion, and apostasy, God graciously called Israel back to Himself.

The church at Laodicea represents such apostate churches as have existed throughout history. It is the last and worst of the seven churches addressed by our Lord.

Barclay--- Laodicea has the grim distinction of being the only Church of which the Risen Christ has nothing good to say.

Laodicea founded about 250 BC was named after the wife of the founder, Antiochus of Syria. During times of peace, it was a distinguished city as it was a on a cross road from Ephesus to the east and to Syria. It was 1. a great banking and financial center. (one of the wealthiest cities in the world) 2. center of clothing manufacture. 3. medical center. (Laodicea ws so conscious of its medical skill in the care of the eyes that it never realized that it was spiritually blind. 4. very large Jewish population.

The contents of this letter may be divided into 6 headings
1. the correspondent - the amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creations of God, says this
2. the church – the church in Laodicea 14a
3. the city – Laodicea 14b
4. the concern – 15-17
5. the command – 18-20
6. the counsel – 21-22

Barclay—

Titles for Jesus Christ

1. Amen – Isaiah 65:16 God is called the God of <u>truth</u>, in Hebrew = god of amen. Jesus is the one whose promises are true beyond all doubt. <u>Truly</u> = Amen in John's gospel (1:53, 3:3, 5 & 11) Jesus is one whose promises can be relied upon.

2. Witness – 3 things about a witness a. seen with his own eyes b. absolutely honest. c. ability to tell what he has to say. <u>Jesus is able to tell his message for never did man speak as he did.</u>