

Book of Revelation

Week 7: The Letter to Sardis

Sardis: It was yet another cultural center, as most of these churches are. This one is from the pre-Roman kingdom of Lydia. It has a very strong Jewish presence, and a historically well known synagogue.

Observations:

- The letter names Sardis a kind of ‘zombie church’. It has the form of life but is actually dead and dying. We made a connection to the first-century Jewish sect of the Pharisees.
 - During the gospel Christ accused them of: Hypocrisy, being overly focused on rules instead of heart, obsessing over the details, ignoring justice mercy and faith, having unclean hearts, being dead-on-the-inside, and of struggling against and killing the prophets of God.
 - The saddest part is that the theological *goal* of that movement came from a good place. We discussed the dangers of getting-lost-in-the-details, and the dangers of legalism.
- We also discussed how a modern church can be in danger of this. Diving a bit into church history we discussed the danger Wesley saw in Christianity becoming “Educated beyond our obedience.” Or to put it another way: Seeking more spiritual information when God has already given you something to work on is dangerous to the soul. It can be a path to zombie-Christian.
 - This is not necessarily about not reading the Bible (because that can be devotional and prayerful) it’s about choosing to learn more when you haven’t applied what you already have.
- Christ’s instructions are to “wake up” and to strengthen what remains. Interesting that they are not instructed to “acquire something new”. Apparently they already have what they need.
 - We issued a challenge to check your “lessons from God” que and see if they are all being properly applied and worked on.
 - Perhaps true spiritual growth comes not from adding more unfinished lessons, but in finishing and applying the ones we *already have*.
- We discussed the soiled clothes/new clothes as a powerful metaphor for forgiveness and connected it to a passage in Zechariah.

Scripture Worth Reading:

- Matthew chapter 23 when Christ speaks about the Pharisees
- Zechariah 3:1-10 when Joshua (different guy than the Joshua from the battle of Jericho) appears before God