

Link to Lonnie Woodruff's *Revelation for Christians Today*, online:
<http://www.abiblecommentary.com/howtounderstandthebookofrevelation.htm>

A Study of Revelation 3

I. Outline.

1. Sardis: The Church of the Living Dead (Rev 3:1-6).
2. Philadelphia: The Church with the Open Door (Rev 3:7-13).
3. Laodicea: The Church that Made the Lord Sick (Rev 3:14-22).

II. Summary.

Chapter three continues the examination Jesus made of the seven churches of Asia. We should have great interest in what Jesus points out as weaknesses or strengths of these churches. This chapter tells about a church which had a reputation that was good among men, but the Lord judged them to be dead—the church at Sardis. We read of the great church at Philadelphia which had a great opportunity set before it. We read about the lukewarm and apathetic church at Laodicea which thought of itself as not needing anything, but was judged by the Lord to be in great need of repentance and zeal.

III. Chronology.

BIBLE PERIOD: The Period of the Church.

If you are not familiar with the 15 Bible Periods, please click here:

<https://maplehillchurchofchrist.files.wordpress.com/2018/05/15bibleperiods.pdf>

IV. Words/Phrases to Study

3:1... AND UNTO THE ANGEL OF THE CHURCH IN SARDIS ... THOU HAST A NAME THAT THOU LIVEST, AND ART DEAD—This church needed to WAKE UP from the “dead.” There are many passages which urge Christians to awake out of sleep (1 Corinthians 15:34; Eph 5:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:6). We are often warned to be watchful (Matthew 26:41; Acts 20:31; 1 Corinthians 10:12; 1 Peter 5:8). Exhortations to steadfastness are frequently found in Scripture (1 Corinthians 15:58; Philippians 1:27). A practical lesson for us from reading our Lord’s letter to the church at Sardis: Are we as AWAKE and WATCHFUL and STEADFAST as we ought to be? ||||| Think about the impact the last phrase of this verse would have had upon the brethren at Sardis as they first had this message read to them. David Roper points out that they already would have heard the praise that Jesus gave to four churches: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, and Thyatira. Sardis might have been expecting to be praised also, but what they are told is that they have a name of being alive, but were actually DEAD, spiritually. They received **no praise** [David Roper, *Truth for Today Commentary: Revelation 1-11*, p., 164].

3:2... BE WATCHFUL...--It could be that when these Christians at Sardis heard these words from the Lord they would have reflected back on the history of the city of Sardis for an illustration of the necessity of watchfulness. Herodotus [*The History*, 1.84] tells about how Cyrus of Persia gained a great victory over Sardis because of Sardis’ over-confidence and lack of watchfulness. It did seem that there was no way to attack Sardis because of the precipitous mountain walls upon which it was built. However, according to Herodotus, a Persian soldier, Hyroeades, watched a Lydian soldier retrieve a helmet which had fallen from the wall. By retrieving the helmet, this Lydian had actually shown Hyroeades that it was possible to climb up to the city. He led a force up the same path, and since King Croesus WAS NOT WATCHFUL, and neglected to post a guard at that unlikely attack point, Cyrus gained his victory.

- 3:5... HE THAT OVERCOMETH, THE SAME SHALL BE CLOTHED IN WHITE RAIMENT;**--“Whosoever he may be that shall overcome sin and the temptations of this world, shall be admitted to this glorious reward. The promise is made not only to those in Sardis who should be victorious, but to all in every age and every land. The hope that is thus held out before us, is that of appearing with the Redeemer in his kingdom, clad in robes expressive of holiness and joy” [*Barnes’ Notes*].
- 3:8... I HAVE SET BEFORE THEE AN OPEN DOOR**—The prophets predicted that the Messianic Kingdom would be world-wide in scope. It would have a small beginning and then would fill the earth **as the waters cover the sea** (Isa 11:9). Daniel foresaw the kingdom as a stone that **was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay** and would break them in pieces (Dan 2:34). This stone which Daniel mentioned **became a great mountain and filled the whole earth** (Dan 2:35). In the New Testament, Jesus compared the growth of the kingdom to **a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof** (Mt 13:31-32). It is obvious from these passages that our Lord did not intend for His kingdom to be LOCAL, or REGIONAL; He planned that it would be international and universal. The church in the city of Philadelphia, in the first century, had been given AN OPEN DOOR for spreading the gospel message. Let us learn from the letter Jesus sent to this good church that He would have us to have EYES OPEN for doors of opportunity to spread the saving message throughout the world!
- 3:10... Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation**--This passage gives a clear statement of the conditional nature of the promises of God--"BECAUSE OF . . . I WILL ALSO KEEP." Brother Harold Littrell translates the phrase, "**the word of my patience,**" as "**the word of my steadfastness,**" and notes that this is another way of saying that they need to "*abide in the doctrine of Christ* (2 John 9)" [*English Study Bible*, p. 401]. The word for "patience" is—*hupomone*--in the NT the characteristic of a man who is not swerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings. Certainly it would be necessary for these saints to continue to abide in the doctrine of Christ in order to receive the conditional promise of overcoming temptation (Revelation 2:10). Coffman says that what the Lord promises here is "*safety through trials, not exemption from trials*" [Coffman, p. 81].
1. Without doubt the Bible teaches that so long as we live upon this earth there will be temptation (1 Corinthians 10:12; 16:13; 1 Peter 5:8).
 2. These saints could expect to continue to be tested severely, but the encouragement from the Lord is that they do not have to yield.
 3. If they continue reacting to temptation as they had done thusfar, they could be and would be victorious.
 4. Through their faithfulness and the providence of the Lord they would be able successfully to meet all trials.
- 3:17... BECAUSE THOU SAYEST, I AM RICH, AND INCREASED WITH GOODS, AND HAVE NEED OF NOTHING**—One thing which should be obvious to us in reading the letters to the seven churches of Asia is that what men think about a particular church and what God thinks are often not the same. This church at Laodicea THOUGHT they had need of nothing. How WRONG they were! This was the church which made our Lord sick. He said they were: **wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked** (3:17). This letter to the church of the Laodiceans should cause us to desire for ourselves a diligent and honest examination in light of God’ Word. We must not be measuring ourselves by ourselves (2 Corinthians 10:12)! Instead, let us judge according to TRUTH (Rom 2:2).

V. Lessons & Applications.

1. **Sardis: The Church of the Living Dead** (Rev 3:1-6).

No Commendation was given to this church. **The reproof was:** I have found no works completed. **The warning was:** If you will not watch I will come upon you as a thief in the night and you will not know that I have come upon you. **The promise:** Those that have not defiled their garments shall walk with me in white. LESSONS:

- 1) That a dying church may still have a good reputation as a living church. Thus, we must not be deceived by what praises men may give to a church.
- 2) That a dying church, in order to heal itself, should—
 - 1- Be alert and watchful.
 - 2- Hang on to the good it has left.
 - 3- Strive to complete her own works before God.
 - 4- Remember how things once were and repent.
- 3) **Important Note:** No doctrinal error is mentioned as threatening this church. In such a situation, when the problem is lack of doing good works, individuals who are faithfully working (thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments, v. 4), even though members of a congregation that is basically dead, may still receive their reward. Some try to use verse 4 to justify staying in a church which IS plagued with doctrinal error and to do so is to misuse the passage—that is like comparing apples and oranges!

2. **Philadelphia: The Church with the Open Door** (Rev 3:7-13).

The commendation: You have little power; you have kept the word, and have not denied the name of Christ. **No reproof** is given. **The warning:** Hold fast what you have so that no man takes your crown. LESSONS:

- 1) A church will little actual power by the standards of men can still be praised by God if it—
 - 1- Keeps His word patiently.
 - 2- Does not deny His name.
- 2) That our problems can be our opportunities if we...
 - 1- Look upon them as OPEN DOORS.
 - 2- Hold fast our crown.

3. **Laodicea: The Church that Made the Lord Sick** (Rev 3:14-22).

The commendation: NONE. **The reproof:** Be zealous and repent. **The promise:** He that overcomes I will give to sit down with me in my throne. LESSONS:

- 1) A lukewarm church has nothing going for it.
- 2) Lukewarmness is worse than being hot or cold—
 - 1- A COLD church would know it was lost and might repent.
 - 2- A lukewarm church has a great self-image and (in its pride) won't know it needs to repent.
- 3) That self-righteous hypocrisy sickens the Lord and makes Him want to spew us out of His mouth.

VI. Questions.

True or False

01. _____ Jesus said, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten."
02. _____ The Laodiceans were poor, blind, and naked.
03. _____ Some who said they were Jews were actually the synagogue of Satan.

04. _____ The church at Philadelphia received severe rebuke from the Lord.
05. _____ There were a few names at Sardis who were worthy.

Multiple Choice (Select the BEST Answer)

06. _____ The Laodicean Christians thought they had need of: (a) truth; (b) the Spirit; (c) nothing.
07. _____ Jesus is described to the church at Laodicea as: (a) He that is holy; (b) He that hath the seven spirits of God; (c) the Amen.
08. _____ The Lord promised to make those of the synagogue of Satan know what: (a) His terror; (b) righteousness; (c) His love for faithful Christians.
09. _____ Was Sardis one of the two churches which receive NO commendation: (a) YES; (b) NO.
10. _____ To which church did Jesus say: I HAVE NOT FOUND THY WORKS PERFECT BEFORE GOD: (a) Sardis; (b) Philadelphia; (c) Laodicea.

Fill in the Blanks

11. **Be _____, and _____ the things which remain, that are ready to _____.**
12. **He that hath an _____, let him _____ what the Spirit saith unto the churches.**
13. **...Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man _____ thy _____.**
14. **So then because thou are _____, and neither cold nor hot, I will _____ thee out of my _____.**
15. **To him that _____ will I grant to _____ with me in my _____...**

Each Question is worth 7 Points

My Score is: _____

Answers will be found on next week's handout

ANSWERS to Revelation 2 Questions... **01**—True (25-28); **02**—False (15); **03**—True (12-13); **04**—True (19); **05**—False (4); **06**—b (28; 22.16); **07**—b (20); **08**—d (14); **09**—d (19); **10**—c (5); **11**—Three (4, 14, 20); **12**—Remember, repent, first (5); **13**—overcometh, second (13); **14**—Pergamos (12-23); **15**—ye, have, already, fast (25).

VII. Seek-A-Word Puzzle. The words may be backwards, diagonal, upside down, etc. See if you can find them all. The more you use the words of the Bible, the greater blessed you will be! You might be surprised at how much this little exercise will help you retain important truths. THANK YOU for the good effort you are putting forth in Bible study. -DRL

P	B	K	R	U	O	H	C	T	A	W
N	S	P	I	R	I	T	S	O	N	D
B	E	C	A	U	S	E	V	O	L	E
B	W	T	C	W	Y	M	R	O	M	D
M	R	H	H	A	D	O	H	A	L	B
V	I	I	M	E	O	C	N	O	E	V
U	T	N	G	D	R	R	H	F	G	H
E	E	G	T	U	R	E	P	E	N	T
E	K	S	H	L	B	V	F	M	A	I
W	A	C	S	K	R	O	W	O	B	A
F	M	M	A	W	O	N	K	C	R	S
H	U	P	M	L	S	B	N	E	V	E

ANGEL	BECAUSE	BEHOLD	CHURCH	COLD
COME	DOOR	EVEN	FAST	HEAR
HOLD	HOUR	KNOW	LOVE	MAKE
MAYEST	NAME	OVERCOMETH	REPENT	SAITH
SPIRIT	THEREFORE	THINGS	WATCH	WHITE
WORKS	WRITE			

VIII. Crossword Puzzle.

Revelation 3 (KJV)														
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		5												
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<u>ACROSS</u>	<u>DOWN</u>
<p>03) The works of Sardis were not this.</p> <p>05) Jesus said this church was dead.</p> <p>08) Jesus desired one church to be ____ or hot.</p> <p>10) Jesus said: "I ____ thee," to the Laodiceans.</p> <p>13) Jesus mentions the synagogue of ____.</p> <p>14) Had an open door.</p> <p>15) Jesus rebukes and chastens as many as He ____.</p> <p>16) This kind of door had been set before Philadelphia.</p>	<p>01) Lukewarm was the church of the ____.</p> <p>02) One of the churches claimed to be ____</p> <p>04) This many at Sardis had not defiled their garments.</p> <p>06) Jesus stands here and knocks.</p> <p>07) Part of the charge to the Laodiceans was to be this.</p> <p>09) Jesus promised to keep Philadelphia Christians from this hour.</p> <p>11) The one who overcomes will be this in God's temple.</p> <p>12) Those who had not defiled their garments would walk with Jesus in it.</p>