

Date: November 15, 2017
 Title: Sardis: The City of Death and the God who is Alive
 Text: Revelation 3:1-6
 Theme:
 Introduction:



THE BIG PICTURE:

“Unlike Thyatira, Sardis was a natural citadel that featured steep cliffs to the rear of the city and a long, flat plain in front of it which gave the city ample warning to see an approaching army and seek refuge behind the city walls. The city was stocked to withstand a lengthy siege and the defenses made it virtually impossible to defeat. Except that happened on at least two occasions.”¹

“On one occasion, it is believed that a small defect was discovered in the rear defenses of the city and it was used to scale at night, enter the city, and open the gates. On the second occasion, it is believed that the city either left the rear completely unguarded or a soldier dropped a helmet and retrieved it revealing a hidden way into the city. While it is not clear how the two victories were won over Sardis, it is clear that a lack of vigilance was a main factor in each.”²

“When Cyrus II, King of Persia, invaded Sardis in 547 BCE, it became obvious that the lack of a defensive wall protecting the lower city was not a wise choice. The Lydian king Croesus simply retreated to the upper town, and the Persian army controlled the lower city with very little resistance. The Persian army finally found an unguarded spot in the citadel’s defenses, and Sardis came under Persian control for the next two centuries.”³

The city was destroyed by a great earthquake in A.D. 17

Outline:

- I. The commission - Greeting (“To the angel of the church in...” [v. 1])
- II. The character (**Reference to Son of Man from Revelation 1** - Christ’s self-description in Rev 1:12-20 [v. 1])

He is holding the leadership of His Church in His hands.

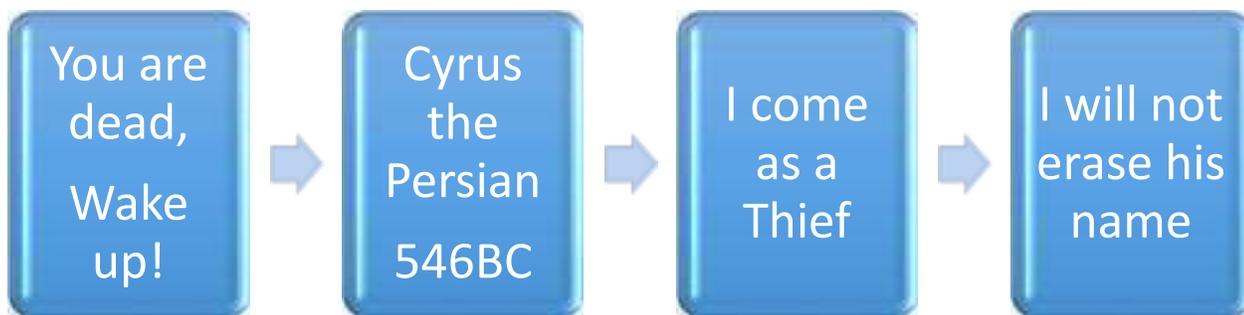
Revelation 3:1-6 - Sardis

III. The commendation (Laodicea lacks this [v. 1])

“Jesus praised the church for having a few people who had not soiled their garments. They had not allowed the culture around them to defile their walk with Christ.”⁴

“At Sardis the church as a whole was dead. Only a few remained faithful and would continue so to the end (3:4). With spiritual wreckage all around them, their hope and salvation lay in the power of God’s Holy Spirit. For their comfort and encouragement ‘the seven Spirits of God’ are mentioned. Let not the faithful few at Sardis fear that they are out of His hand or beyond His reach and power to save.”⁵

IV. The correction (Smyrna and Philadelphia lack this [vv. 2-4])



Physical big and busy does not mean or translate into spiritual vigor and veracity. You can look like you are alive, but be dead.

“At the same time, Jesus condemned the church for having a reputation without substance. **They had a reputation for being alive, but were actually dead.** What a tremendous warning for our churches today.”⁶

“If the church failed to repent, Jesus would come like a thief in the night. The imagery would have been easy for this city to understand. Think about that. Jesus coming to them should have been a blessing, but instead it was a threat. That is how far this church had fallen.”⁷

V. The challenge (“to him who overcomes” [v. 5])

“Those who overcome were promised that they would walk with Christ in white, an image of purity. Their name would remain in the book of life and Jesus would confess their names before the Father. What amazing promises!”⁸

“John is not advancing a theory about predestination, which in any case always has as its corollary that those who are to be saved turn out to be those who persevere. He is holding out a standard early Christian warning, going back to those of John the Baptist, Paul and Jesus himself. **It’s a warning against presuming that belonging to the community of the people of God, irrespective of behavior within it, is all that is required.**”⁹

VI. The call (“He who has an ear, let him hear...” [v. 6])

Shepherding the Sheep: (What is the NEXT STEP?)

Sardis: The City of Death and the God who is Alive (Revelation 3:1-6)

³“For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. ⁴But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, ⁵He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, ⁶whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Titus 2:3-7).

- I. The dead are deceived / I have not found your deeds completed (vv. 1, 2)
- II. The dead are distracted / [thief] caught off guard by God’s return (v. 3)
- III. The dead can be awakened and join the few who are (vv. 4, 5)

There are those within the dead churches that do believe, are alive, and remain faithful to Jesus / Gospel despite the deadness of the church (vv. 4, 5).

¹ <https://www.gospelproject.com/2015/08/15/gods-warning-to-the-churches/>

² <https://www.gospelproject.com/2015/08/15/gods-warning-to-the-churches/>

³ <https://www.ancient.eu/sardis/>

⁴ <https://www.gospelproject.com/2015/08/15/gods-warning-to-the-churches/>

⁵ Luther Poellot, *Revelation*, CCCS, p. 53.

⁶ <https://www.gospelproject.com/2015/08/15/gods-warning-to-the-churches/>

⁷ <https://www.gospelproject.com/2015/08/15/gods-warning-to-the-churches/>

⁸ <https://www.gospelproject.com/2015/08/15/gods-warning-to-the-churches/>

⁹ Tom Wright, *Revelation for Everyone*, p. 31.

Date: November 15, 2017
Title: Philadelphia: The Gateway City and the God who holds the KEYS
Text: Revelation 3:7-13
Theme:
Introduction:



THE BIG PICTURE:

“The city of Philadelphia was a frontier outpost that opened travel to the “wild east” of that time. Basically, think of the wild west of the 1800s in America and just turn it around and put it in the east. As such, Philadelphia was known as the **“City of the Door.”** The city was named several times, usually after the emperor, in attempts to earn favor with Rome.”¹

“The city was destroyed by a great earthquake in A.D. 17 resulting in the people living outside of the city itself for a time out of fear that another earthquake would occur. The people in Philadelphia lived in constant dread of another disaster.”²

Outline:

- I. The commission - Greeting (“To the angel of the church in...” [v. 1])
- II. The character (**Reference to Son of Man from Revelation 1** - Christ’s self-description in Rev 1:12-20 [v. 1])



Revelation 3:7-13 - Philadelphia

III. The commendation (Laodicea lacks this [vv. 2, 3])

“Jesus praises the church because even though they had limited strength, they kept God’s Word and did not deny His name. The church probably was smaller and lacked any political, social, or financial influence in Philadelphia, yet that did not cause them to compromise to their culture around them.”³

The door of opportunity exists, but so also obstacles and opposition. “We should not imagine a ‘church’ on one street corner and a ‘synagogue’ on another, as in many cities today. **We should imagine a Jewish community of several thousand, with its own buildings and community life, and a church of probably two or three dozen at most, holding on to the highly improbable, and extremely risky, claim that the God of Israel had raised Jesus from the dead.** That imbalance goes some way to help us explain what is now being said.”⁴

IV. The correction (Smyrna and Philadelphia lack this [v. 4])

“**The church is faulted for nothing.** While the church was not perfect, there was nothing Jesus for Jesus to condemn them over.”⁵

V. The challenge (“to him who overcomes” [v. 7b])

“Jesus promises several rewards to those who persevered in this church. **First**, He would position an open door of opportunity before them. This was a clear allusion to the nickname of the city and shows that God rewards our faithfulness by giving us more opportunities to glorify Him. **Second**, the synagogue of Satan would bow to them, proving God’s love for the church. **Third**, the church would be spared from the worldwide hour of testing that some believe refers to the Great Tribulation. **Fourth, they would be made a pillar in the temple of God and would remain there. Clearly this would have been significant to the church in Philadelphia based on the city’s earthquakes and uncertainty.** **Fifth**, the church would receive the name of the heavenly city and Jesus Himself on them. Again, this was a clear reference to the frequent name changes of the city.”⁶

“The first Christians, partly because of Jesus and partly because of the gift of the spirit, regarded themselves as the true Temple, the place where the living God had made his home. That metaphor depends for its force on this idea of the church as the new Temple.”⁷

VI. The call (“He who has an ear, let him hear...” [v. 7a])

Shepherding the Sheep: (What is the NEXT STEP?)

Philadelphia: The Gateway City and the God who holds the KEYS (Revelation 3:7-13)

²² "Then I will set the key of the house of David on his shoulder, When he opens no one will shut, When he shuts no one will open. ²³ I will drive him like a peg in a firm place, And he will become a throne of glory to his father's house. ²⁴ So they will hang on him all the glory of his father's house, offspring and issue, all the least of vessels, from bowls to all the jars. ²⁵ In that day," declares the LORD of hosts, "the peg driven in a firm place will give way; it will even break off and fall, and the load hanging on it will be cut off, for the LORD has spoken" (Isa. 22:22-25).

I. The Key of David assures the church access into God's Presence (vv. 7, 8)

Heb. 4:14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. 16 **Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.**

II. The Key of David assures the church participation in God's Victory (v. 9)

Because of the church's status as co-regent, the enemies of God will come and bow down before her.

III. The Key of David assures the church of God's Protection (v. 10)

In the Day of Judgment, the church will not face God as Judge, but as Father. Does Revelation define for the reader what this "hour" of "trial" is?

IV. The Key of David assures the church of God's Promise (vv. 11, 12)

Those who believe will overcome.

¹ <https://www.gospelproject.com/2015/08/15/gods-warning-to-the-churches/>

² <https://www.gospelproject.com/2015/08/15/gods-warning-to-the-churches/>

³ <https://www.gospelproject.com/2015/08/15/gods-warning-to-the-churches/>

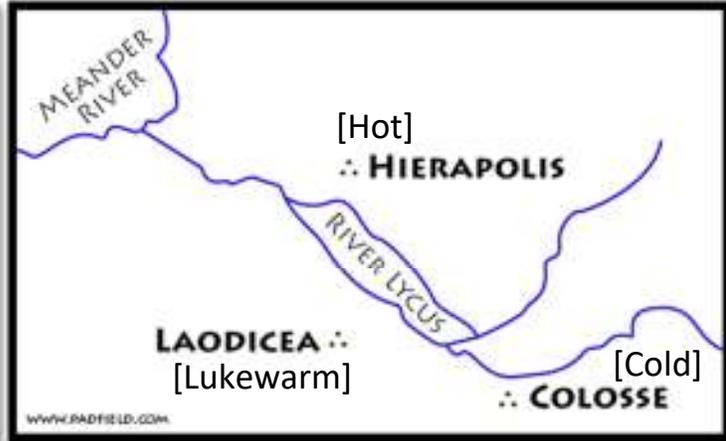
⁴ Tom Wright, *Revelation for Everyone*, p. 34.

⁵ <https://www.gospelproject.com/2015/08/15/gods-warning-to-the-churches/>

⁶ <https://www.gospelproject.com/2015/08/15/gods-warning-to-the-churches/>

⁷ Tom Wright, *Revelation for Everyone*, p. 33.

Date: November 15, 2017
 Title: Laodicea: The Self-Righteous City and the God who Saves
 Text: Revelation 3:14-22
 Theme:
 Introduction:



THE BIG PICTURE:

"Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis were three closely-situated cities mentioned by Paul in the New Testament, each possessing Christians. Laodicea was ~10 miles ~WNW of Colossae. Hierapolis was believed to be ~13 miles ~NNE of Laodicea. **These three cities formed a crude triangle, the so-called "tri-city" area.**"¹

"The city of Laodicea was known for three key industries: **banking, clothing (most notably, expensive black togas), and an eye and ear medical school** (which produced a special salve). The city was wealthy and quite vain. **It refused Roman funding so that Rome would not place its soldiers in the city.**"²

"Tacitus records the quake in the *7th year of Nero* (Nero was Emperor of Rome from AD 54-68, putting the earthquake around AD 61 – Annals 14.27. Tacitus recorded that Laodicea was also destroyed in the quake, but was later rebuilt apparently without Roman assistance. Note that Jesus wrote to Laodicea, but Colossae was not mentioned among the letters of Revelation. **By this time (AD 96), Colossae in large part no longer existed.**"³

"Laodicea was a "moderate" city that adapted to the needs and wishes of others. This makes sense when you consider how banking was one of its major industries and the need of bankers to please their customers. **Basically the city was quite accommodating and willing to compromise.** It was truly a tolerant city almost 2,000 years before tolerance became so fashionable."⁴

“While the city had so much going for it from the world’s perspective, **it did have one major problem: lack of good drinking water. The Lycus River nearby was not good for drinking water so water was piped in from two nearby cities. Colossae had good, cold water, but by the time it arrived in Laodicea, it was warm with junk in it. The Hieropolis was known for its soothing hot springs, but again, by the time the water reached Laodicea, it was room temperature with sulfur in it which took some getting used to.**”⁵

“Laodicea was near two other towns, each of which had a unique water source. To the north was Hierapolis which had a natural hot spring, often used for medicinal purposes. To the east was Colossae which had cold, pure waters. In contrast to these towns, Laodicea had no permanent supply of good water. Efforts to pipe water to the city from nearby springs were successful, but it would arrive lukewarm. The metaphor in the text is not meant to relate spiritual fervor to temperature. This would mean that Laodicea would be commended for being spiritually cold, but it is unlikely that Jesus would commend this. Instead, the metaphor condemns Laodicea for not providing spiritual healing (being hot) or spiritual refreshment (being cold) to those around them. **It is a condemnation of their lack of works and lack of witness.**”⁶

Outline:

- I. The commission - Greeting (“To the angel of the church in...” [v. 14a])
- II. The character (**Reference to Son of Man from Revelation 1** - Christ’s self-description in Rev 1:12-20 [v. 14b])



III. The commendation (Laodicea lacks this)

Jesus praises the church for nothing. Not one word of commendation.

Their self-righteous mindset made our Lord “sick.” **The language is intentionally powerful. This is the false doctrine that damns souls.** This is the strange teaching permeating today’s church. It is the same mindset existing in the first century church and has continued throughout time. Everything they claimed to be, they were impoverished in. Only God could give them what they truly needed. God has no room for independence. Christianity is counter cultural. Christian maturity is not independence, but dependency. It is not isolation, but interdependency.

IV. The correction (Smyrna and Philadelphia lack this [vv. 15-20])

“Jesus rebuked the church for being lukewarm and not being either hot or cold. Now, most of the time we hear this, we are told that we are to be “hot” for Jesus or “cold” for Him, just not somewhere in the middle. It’s all or nothing. All in, or all out. While there is some truth to that, I would propose Jesus meant something all together different.

Think about the drinking water the city received. The hot water of the Hieropolis had great value in that city. It was wonderfully soothing when one bathed in it. But that hot water wasn’t much use when it was lukewarm. Likewise, the cold water of Colossae was good for something in that city. But it wasn’t much use when it was warm in Laodicea. Both the hot water and cold water were good because they were useful. They had a purpose. But when both were warm, they had no purpose. **It seems that Jesus’ condemnation is that the church in Laodicea had no purpose. It had compromised to the point of not being of any use.** In the same way, the church had adopted the pride of the city and believed it had no use of God, but in reality, they were pitiful, poor, blind, and naked (notice all of the major industries in the city are included).”⁷

“A well-documented fact of Colossian history was that the Lycus river, beginning at Colossae, disappeared underground for about 1/2 mile. In the area where the underground course was believed to run is now a ~30' deep canyon. It is believed this canyon was formed by collapsing of earth caused by the AD 60 earthquake [102]. This may help explain the existence of cold springs in the area; for if the Lycus flowed several hundred yards beneath the surface, it would have emerged cold. And although the 60 AD earthquake may have rendered the underground Lycus course extinct, it's clear that underground water activity was not uncommon. Realizing Hierapolis remains famous even today for it's hot springs, this helps explain Jesus' "*neither cold nor hot*" remarks about Laodicea, which was sandwiched approximately between its two sister cities (Rev 3:16 – Colossae=cold, Hierapolis=hot).”⁸

Jesus calls on the church to take several actions – all of which carry imagery from the city’s primary industries. They are to buy gold (banking), white garments (clothing), and eye salve (eye doctors) from Christ. In essence, Jesus is calling them to turn from the worldly things they trust in, and turn to Him instead. They are to be zealous and repent.”⁹

Revelation 3:14-22 - Laodicea

“The city of Laodicea had a famous medical school and exported a powder (called a “Phrygian powder”) that was widely used as an *eye salve*. It was applied to the eyes in the form of a paste the consistency of dough (the Greek term for the salve here, κολλούριον, kollourion [Latin *collyrium*], is a diminutive form of the word for a long roll of bread).”¹⁰

Banking [Rich]	Poor	Gold	Rich
Black Sheep [Garment]	Naked	White Garment	No Shame
Eye Salve [Sight]	Blind	Eye Salve	Sight

“**Vomit**” “This is the literal meaning of the Greek verb ἐμέω (emew). It is usually translated with a much weaker term like “spit out” due to the unpleasant connotations of the English verb “vomit,” as noted by L&N 23.44. The situation confronting the Laodicean church is a dire one, however, and such a term is necessary if the modern reader is to understand the gravity of the situation.”¹¹

Jesus calls the church to invite Him in for communion. Somehow the church let go of the gospel and became distracted by works righteousness. In so doing, they abandoned the benefits of the gospel. They no longer “felt” the community and communion they could know and experience by celebrating His presence in their midst. Jesus stands at the door of His church and calls us to invite Him in. It’s His church! All we do by not acknowledging Him is rob ourselves of His joy.

V. The challenge (“to him who overcomes” [v. 21])

“Jesus promises that He reproveth and disciplines those whom He loves. While this may sound like a warning, it is really a reward because such discipline is for our good. The warning would be *not* experiencing His discipline.”¹²

I wonder if this is not referring to election?

“Jesus describes Himself as standing at the door and knocking. This verse is often used in evangelism, but notice that its primary context is Jesus knocking on the door of His own church! Those who opened the door would enjoy Christ coming in and dining together. They would then be seated with Christ on His throne.”¹³

VI. The call (“He who has an ear, let him hear...” [v. 22])

Shepherding the Sheep: (What is the NEXT STEP?)

Laodicea: The Self-Righteous City and the God who Saves (Revelation 3:14-22)

³“For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. ⁴But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, ⁵He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, ⁶whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Titus 2:3-7).

- I. The Lukewarm make God “sick” (vv. 15, 16)
- II. The Lukewarm described as self-righteous (v. 17)
- III. God invites the Lukewarm to receive His righteousness (vv. 18-20)
- IV. The righteousness of God changes the Lukewarm into Overcomers (vv. 21, 22)

¹ <http://religiouslyincorrect.com/Articles/TriCityAreaEarthquake.shtml>

² <https://www.gospelproject.com/2015/08/15/gods-warning-to-the-churches/>

³ <http://religiouslyincorrect.com/Articles/TriCityAreaEarthquake.shtml>

⁴ <https://www.gospelproject.com/2015/08/15/gods-warning-to-the-churches/>

⁵ <https://www.gospelproject.com/2015/08/15/gods-warning-to-the-churches/>

⁶ <https://net.bible.org/#!/bible/Revelation+3:13>

⁷ <https://www.gospelproject.com/2015/08/15/gods-warning-to-the-churches/>

⁸ <http://religiouslyincorrect.com/Articles/TriCityAreaEarthquake.shtml>

⁹ <https://www.gospelproject.com/2015/08/15/gods-warning-to-the-churches/>

¹⁰ <https://net.bible.org/#!/bible/Revelation+3:13>

¹¹ <https://net.bible.org/#!/bible/Revelation+3:13>

¹² <https://www.gospelproject.com/2015/08/15/gods-warning-to-the-churches/>

¹³ <https://www.gospelproject.com/2015/08/15/gods-warning-to-the-churches/>

