

# SRMBC Family Bible Study

## Revelation - The Triumph of God

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### Lesson 3: My Dear Compromised People

### Revelation 3

Experts tell us we are exposed to fourteen hundred advertisements a day. It takes an enormous act of will not to be conformed to our environment, to be in but not of the world.

The remaining three churches in the crownlike array of towns in Asia would be visited by a postal courier completing his circuit in the exact order of John's letters. Each letter helps us resist this powerful threat of being conformed to the world.

**Group Discussion.** In what ways do Christian groups and churches you know resemble the surrounding culture?

- **Self-Help/Man-Centered Preaching** (Prosperity Gospel, Cotton – Candy sermons, etc.)
- **Erosion of Marriage and Biblical Sexual Ethics** (Un-Biblical views on Divorce, Gender, Homosexuality, etc.
- **No Emphasis on Prayer** - (Dependence Human efforts instead of the Power and Spirit of God.)
- **Gimmick-based Evangelism** – Attempting to reach people with worldly methods instead of the Gospel.
- **“Worldly” Worship** – Using Worldly music, principles and ways to entertain – rather than Glorify God.

### Sardis: Read Revelation 3:1 – 6.

1. In the first century, Sardis exhibited a stark contrast between its past splendor as a Persian capital and its current decay. What indications does the Lord give that the church's reputation does not match its reality?

<u>Sardis Reputation</u>	<u>Jesus Assessment</u>	<u>Symptom/Indications</u>
...that you have a name that you are alive	...but you are dead. (v.1)	The Church is Literally the “Walking Dead” (spiritually) – Alive on the outside but dead on the inside.
	...strengthen the things which remain. (v.2)	Apparently, this church has lost a lot of power, influence, effectiveness, gifts. There is a challenge to work with what is left.
	...I have not found your works perfect before God. (v. 2)	Jesus sees their living and works as coming up short of who and what God has called them to be.
	...hold fast and repent (v.3)	It looks like there were some truths/blessings they received but had lost sight of. there needs to be a heart and mind change.
	...defiled their garments (v.4)	A soiled lifestyle that can be seen people all around the church but not recognized by the

		members in the church – despite the members who are still “clean.”
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2. Having lost most of its former glory, Sardis was now known more for its wickedness and affluence. The imperial cult had been married to local religion. Its fortress had twice **been captured by stealth** “like a thief” (v. 3). What bearing do you think this had on the problems the church in Sardis was facing?

- Despite their good appearance, Jesus saw them as dead. This indicates no struggle, no fight, no persecution.
- The lack of watching, carelessness and complacency that the surrounding culture has been dealing with has seeped into the church.
- Being dead, the church in Sardis presented no significant threat to Satan’s domain, so it wasn’t worth attacking.
- “The church of Sardis was at peace – but it was the peace of the dead.” (Barclay)

3. George Ladd wrote: “Here is a picture of nominal Christianity, outwardly prosperous, busy with the externals of religious activity, but devoid of spiritual life and power” (A Commentary on the Revelation of John [Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1972], p. 56). To what extent does the church today fit this picture?

- The lack of real persecution and reduced opposition.
- The worldly practices (Music, Lifestyles, Appearance...)
- The lack of impact in community –
- The focus on earthly things (wealth, health, personal accomplishment, etc.)
- The de-valuing and de-emphasizing of the importance of Scripture
- No emphasis on eternal things – the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming of Christ, the judgment.

#### **Philadelphia: Read Revelation 3:7 – 13.**

4. Of the seven churches only the churches in Philadelphia and Smyrna received nothing but praise and promises. Why would a weak church be encouraged by Jesus’ promise of an open door of opportunity (v. 8)?

- The Open Door of Opportunity would put their troubles in their proper perspective.
- The Open Door of Opportunity lets them know that Jesus has not forgotten them.
- The Open Door of Opportunity gives them hope for the future.
- The Open Door of Opportunity gives this church purpose that overrides their fear and possible discouragement.
- The Open Door encourages this that Jesus is in control of every situation.
- No man, no person will be able to thwart or stop the plan of God.

5. Along with Sardis and the other cities, Philadelphia had been flattened by a devastating earthquake in A.D. 17. In addition, the Philadelphian believers suffered the slanderous accusation of the Jews. As the Philadelphian church faced opposition, how would Jesus' other promises encourage them (vv. 9-13)?

Jesus' Promise	Encouragement
... I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, ...come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.	Jesus will defeat their enemies – and turn their fortunes around – as a witness
Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial ...	No matter how bad things look – Jesus will keep us from the Great Tribulation the rest of the world will face.
Behold, I am coming quickly!	Jesus – Our Hope and Our Savior is coming soon.
Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.	We have a crown – an eternal reward that is ours, if we hold on to our faith.
He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God,	Jesus has a solid and sure place in God, house for those who overcome.
I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.	A new Name – and status in the heavenly kingdom – a personal inscription from Jesus.

6. Members of many churches today are discouraged. What can we learn from Christ's words to the Philadelphians?

Many of us may feel like the Christians in Sardis, weak and uninfluential. Be sure to stress the dignity implied in the great promises Christ gives his people in verse:

- We are His people and have a divine purpose in Christ
- We have an assured place in the kingdom ("a pillar"),
- We have a definite relationship with the Lord ("the name of my God")
- We will and do have a perfect environment to live in ("the city of my God")

**Laodicea: Read Revelation 3:14 – 22.**

7. This is the only church about which Jesus has nothing good to say. Laodicea's northern neighbor Hierapolis had famous hot springs. Its southern neighbor Colosse had refreshing cool water. A six-mile aqueduct brought water to Laodicea, but by the time it arrived it was lukewarm. How does this help us understand Christ's statements in verses 14-16?

- Cold and hot drinks were common at feasts, but never lukewarm. There were hot and cold springs near Laodicea.
- The Laodiceans were spiritually cold, but not cold as the world. there is more hope of the "cold," of the world, and not yet warmed by the Gospel call.

- Hot," literally, "boiling - hot and fervent Christians on fire for the work and worship of the Lord.
- The lukewarm state, most fatal when, as here, an abiding condition, for it is mistaken for a safe state. (Rev 3:17).

8. Laodicea was so self-sufficient that when they suffered an earthquake in A.D. 60 they rejected help from Rome. How did this attitude affect them spiritually? What did the Laodicean Christians need to do to become overcomers?

Jesus Instruction	Remarks
I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich...	The purity of God's word & faith that is tried is purified, even in the trials of life. Greek, Rich: "mayest be enriched."
and white garments, that you may be clothed...	Laodicea's wools were famous. Christ offers infinitely whiter raiment. Christ's righteousness imputed to the believer in justification and imparted in sanctification.
...anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.	like the ancient eye-salve's, first smarts with conviction of sin, then heals. He opens our eyes first to ourselves in our wretchedness, then the precious Saviour.
...be zealous and repent	Present tense in the Greek, of a lifelong course of zeal. The opposite of "lukewarm."; an act to be once for all done change of mind and heart
Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.	Respond to the Spirit's inward knocking on the doors of our hearts through providence and His word.

9. How does Jesus demonstrate his love for this church?

Jesus' Loving Demonstration	Remarks
I rebuke	In the New Testament "rebuke" means to instruct by chastisement (Heb 12:5, 6 ).
and chasten.	In the divine chastening, the sinner at one and the same time winces under the rod and learns righteousness.
Behold, I stand at the door and knock.	His loving desire for the sinner's salvation Christ knocks, but does not break open the door

10. As you review all seven letters (Revelation 2—3), what has the Spirit taught you about being an overcomer?

- To listen to the voice of the Spirit through the Word of God.
- To reflect on remember the Promises of God when going through tough times.
- Jesus knows about my enemies and will never leave me and will deal with them in due time.
- If I hold on to my faith – Jesus has eternal rewards that no one can take away.
- Despite the best (or worst) attempts of the enemy, Jesus has and will open up doors of opportunity that no one can shut.
- Jesus has no use for a lukewarm church – I/we need to be “All – In!”

*Take time now to worship the Lamb and the One who sits on the throne.*

### *Keys For Living*



Busyness – even in “church work” does not necessarily indicate that a church has spiritual life. Walking in obedience to the Word and Will of Christ is an individual and corporate responsibility.



Despite the best efforts of the world the flesh and the devil, when we live a life that pleases the Lord, He will keep us in the present and reward us in the future.



When we are walking in ways that do not please the Lord, He brings His discipline and correction – not to condemn but as an act of His Gracious Love. When disciplined, we should respond in confession and repentance and invite Jesus to make His home in our hearts.