

The First-Century Church
"The Church in Sardis"

Introduction:

1. The New Testament contains information (positive and negative) that was written "about" as well as "to" various congregations in the first century.
2. By "rightly dividing" this information we can know the Lord's will for His church today.
3. This lesson is a study of the message that the Lord sent to the church in Sardis (Revelation 3:1-6).

Discussion:

- I. (vs.1a) THE INTRODUCTION TO THIS MESSAGE
 - A. This message was addressed to *"the angel [messenger] of the church in Sardis."*
 - B. Although John recorded this message, it was actually spoken by the Lord.
 1. The Lord described Himself as He who has:
 - a. *"the seven Spirits of God"*
 - 1) (1:4) John's greeting included *"the seven Spirits"* before God's throne.
 - 2) This seems to be an expression referring to the Holy Spirit -- we must remember that Jesus was given the Spirit without measure (John 3:34).
 - b. *"the seven stars."*
 - 1) (1:16) When John saw his vision of the Lord, *"he had in his right hand seven stars."*
 - 2) (1:20) The 7 stars are identified as *"the angels of the seven churches."*
 2. As the One who has the 7 Spirits of God and the 7 stars, Christ sees and knows everything that takes place in His church.
- II. THE LORD REBUKED THE CHURCH IN SARDIS
 - A. The Lord was able to rebuke this church because He knew its works (vs.1b).
 - B. The Lord rebuked the church in Sardis because it was *"dead."*
 1. Christ did not rebuke this church for allowing false doctrine to be taught.
 2. This church even had a *"name"* [reputation] that it was alive.
 3. Regardless of how this church saw itself and how others saw it, the Lord saw it as being spiritually dead.
 - C. (vs.2b) This congregation was dead because its works were not *"perfect"* [completed] before God (Hebrews 6:1a).
 1. On the surface, this church appeared to be busy and active.
 2. However, it was not fulfilling its mission.
 - D. (vs.4) Thankfully, not all the members of the Sardis congregation were *"defiled."*
 1. *"A few"* had not *"defiled their garments,"* and the Lord said He would bless them.
 2. Unfortunately, it seems that most of the members were defiled.
- III. THE LORD URGED THE CHURCH IN SARDIS TO REPENT
 - A. (vs.2a) The Lord told this congregation to:
 1. *"be watchful"* [Wake up! -- Ephesians 5:14-16]
 2. *"strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die."*
 - B. (vs.3a) The Lord admonished this congregation to:
 1. remember how it had received and heard the Gospel
 2. *"hold fast"*
 3. *"repent."*
 - C. (vs.3b) If this church failed to repent, the Lord would come upon it in judgment.
 - D. (vs.5) Those who overcame would:
 1. *"be clothed in white raiment"*
 2. not have their names removed from *"the book of life"*
 3. be confessed by Christ before the Father and His angels.
- IV. APPLICATION
 - A. Let us compare the "dead" church in Sardis to the "living" church in Jerusalem (Acts 2:42-47).
 - B. Which congregation had the Lord's approval?