

LESSON 5

LETTERS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES IN ASIA (PART 2)

SARDIS: THE CHURCH LIVING IN THE PAST (3:1–6)

The fifth letter is to the church in the once-illustrious city of Sardis, located south-southeast of Thyatira. This church has the dubious distinction of being one of two churches (the other being Laodicea) about whom nothing good is said—at least as far as the entire congregation is concerned.

1. What three attributes of the city of Sardis were reflected by the church there?
2. What does the phrase “the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars” (3:1) mean, and why was it so encouraging?
3. What four specific symptoms caused Jesus to say that the church in Sardis had a terminal illness?
4. Does the warning in 3:3b refer to the Second Coming? Explain.
5. What three things did Jesus promise to those in the Sardis church who overcame?

PHILADELPHIA: THE CHURCH THAT DID WHAT IT COULD WITH WHAT IT HAD (3:7–13)

Jesus left the best and the worst churches for last. First, we will look at the best church, the one in Philadelphia.

6. What is the history of the city of Philadelphia, and where did the city get its name?
7. What is the significance of “the key of David” in 3:7?
8. What was the “little power” of verse 8, and why did Jesus mention it?

9. What was the nature of the gift of the “open door” that Jesus promised to the Christians in Philadelphia (3:8)?
10. To what did Jesus’ promise in 3:9 refer?
11. What was “the hour of testing” mentioned in verse 10, and when would it occur?
12. In what way would Jesus keep the church from the hour of testing?
13. What did Jesus mean when He promised to make anyone who overcame “a pillar in the temple”?
14. To what does “The new Jerusalem” (3:12) refer?

**LAODICEA: THE CHURCH THAT
HAD IT MADE (3:14–22)**

This letter is to the last of the seven churches in Asia. Forty-three miles southeast of Philadelphia lie the extensive ruins of Laodicea. The city has not been excavated, and the tops of massive arches and other structures thrust upward from the rocky soil like gigantic tombstones in sad memory of a proud city that thought it “had it made.”

15. What three characteristics of Laodicea directly relate to the letter to the church located there?
16. Why does this letter include a unique description of Jesus?
17. What do the words “cold” and “hot” represent about spirituality in 3:15?
18. If “cold” refers to an undesirable state, why might Jesus have wished that the Laodiceans were cold instead of lukewarm?
19. What do the words “wretched,” “miserable,” “poor,” “blind,” and “naked” mean in 3:17?
20. What response should the Laodiceans have had to Jesus’ words?