



+INTRODUCTION

The disconnect between how things *appear* and how they really *are*, come to sharp contrast in Jesus' letter to the church in Sardis. Paralleling the bygone greatness of this ancient city, the church too, appeared to have settled into an apathetic state, placing its confidence in its reputation from the past, rather than keeping watchful and staying diligent, in the present.

Sardis was once a renowned city with a lavish history of wealth, power and natural security, provided by Mt. Tmolus's sheer cliff, which the city was literally built into. Thought to be virtually impregnable, the citizens within the city became self-assured + complacent and even the army had followed suit. On at least two occasions, invading armies had conquered this 'impenetrable' city exposing the folly of its citizens' misplaced trust in their comfort + fortification.

Modern archeology has discovered that Sardis was home to the world's largest synagogue, proving there was a massive Jewish community in this city, as well a significant Messianic (Christian) community too.

Jesus' rebuke to this church though vague, reverberates with the echo of this cities' embarrassing past. Perhaps this church had amassed large amounts of credibility, property, and power which had earned for it a 'reputation of being alive'. However, the truth is, they were 'dead'.

Had they become to comfortable?
Had they forgotten the mission of the church?
Had they placed their confidence in the reputation they earned, over God?

Jesus's rebuke, 'repent...or I will come to you like a thief in the night', would have been a stern warning, contextually full of significance and meaning, no doubt intended to rouse them from their slumber.

+READ (Revelation 3:1-6)

Read this passage out loud together as a group/family before asking any of the below questions.

+OBSERVATION/INTERPRETATION

1. How would you describe the church of Sardis, and why?
2. What does the description of Jesus in vs 1 emphasize & why is it especially appropriate for this church?
3. In Isaiah 29:13, God addresses some characteristics of spiritual "deadness." Discuss these characteristics. Do you think these characteristics are evident in some churches today? How?
4. In verses 2-3 discuss the five commands or imperatives Jesus gave to this church.

As you read through each of the 7 letters to the churches observe how each follows or deviates from the basic pattern below:

1. Address (what is the letter addressing?)
2. A title/s of Jesus (what title from chapter 1 is repeated here?)
3. Commendation (what does Jesus commend them for?)
4. Criticism (what does Jesus criticize them for?)
5. Counsel (how does Jesus counsel them?)
6. Command (what command/s does Jesus give to them to follow?)
7. Promise (what is promised to them?)

+APPLICATION

1. What is one personal "lesson for life" that you can apply in yourself from this 'letter to Sardis'?
2. Take some time to evaluate your spiritual condition. Are you alive and vibrant for the Lord? Are any of the characteristics of Isaiah 29:13 that are true of your life today? If so, confess them and ask God to rekindle the fire in your heart.

+MEMORY VERSE

Rev 3:5 The one who conquers will be clothed in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels.

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