



17. November 2020

“The churches of Sardis and Laodicea”

Rev 3:1-6.14-22

Write to the angel of the church in Sardis and say, "Here is the message of the one who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars: I know about your behaviour: how you are reputed to be alive and yet are dead. Wake up; put some resolve into what little vigour you have left: it is dying fast. So far I have failed to notice anything in your behaviour that my God could possibly call perfect; remember how you first heard the message. Hold on to that. Repent! If you do not wake up, I shall come to you like a thief, and you will have no idea at what hour I shall come upon you. There are a few in Sardis, it is true, who have kept their robes unstained, and they are fit to come with me, dressed in white. Anyone who proves victorious will be dressed, like these, in white robes; I shall not blot that name out of the book of life, but acknowledge it in the presence of my Father and his angels. Let anyone who can hear, listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches."

'Write to the angel of the church in Laodicea and say, "Here is the message of the Amen, the trustworthy, the true witness, the Principle of God's creation: I know about your activities: how you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were one or the other, but since you are neither hot nor cold, but only lukewarm, I will spit you out of my mouth. You say to yourself: I am rich, I have made a fortune and have everything I want, never realising that you are wretchedly and pitifully poor, and blind and naked too. I warn you, buy from me the gold that has been tested in the fire to make you truly rich, and white robes to clothe you and hide your shameful nakedness, and ointment to put on your eyes to enable you to see. I reprove and train those whom I love: so repent in real earnest. Look, I am standing at the door, knocking. If one of you hears me calling and opens the door, I will come in to share a meal at that person's side. Anyone who proves victorious I will allow to share my throne, just as I have myself overcome and have taken my seat with my Father on his throne. Let anyone who can hear, listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches."'

The serious tone of the letters cannot be ignored!

The church in Sardis is about the fact that there are church members who bear the name “Christians”, but whose inner life has largely died! That is why their deeds are no longer of full value! Externally, life seems to continue to run in familiar

ways, but the inner strength, the love, which is the full motivation for all deeds - it has become weak. The text suggests that the traditional teaching is no longer being properly observed! Here the problem becomes visible that a deviation from the correct teaching has corresponding consequences! When such a deviation occurs, one is no longer properly supported by the grace of truth and the clear orientation is lost! The adherence to the handed-down truth is therefore in principle not a form of immobility and anxious legalism - although these deficiencies also exist - but the drawing from the sources of truth! This clinging is an inner assurance, given again and again, that the grace of God unfolds in those paths that God himself has given! Outside this path of truth disorder arises!

It is important for me to point out this reality again and again, as the Holy Scriptures do, and especially in these days when some Christians do not consider teaching to be so important anymore, taking it only as a general orientation, but no longer considering it binding. They are very much in error, because in time this will also have an effect on the whole Christian life, because the light of right doctrine will illuminate the mind less and less, and deviations or even errors will become easily accessible. Deviations or errors, however, have a negative effect in the long run, because instead of divine light, human considerations, worldly thinking or even demonic delusion can dominate.

The call to repentance to the church of Sardis is logically connected with the admonition to hold on to the teaching! Also in Sardis there is the "Holy Remnant" - those who have remained faithful and thus remain recorded in the Book of Life! They must have given the full confession and testimony for Christ, because for them it is said: *"I shall not blot that name out of the book of life, but acknowledge it in the presence of my Father and his angels."*

Together with the seriousness of the admonition, the reference to the way of healing and overcoming is given - it is the way God deals with us! It is clearly said what does not correspond to His will, and just as clearly how one can return to this will! Also the consequences are mentioned if the conversion does not take place! Those who do not make an effort to live in all truth will become blind to the coming of the Lord, they will not notice the hour that is approaching, they will be unprepared (*cf. Mt 25:11-13*)!

Even more far-reaching is the admonition to Laodicea! If one follows certain interpretations, then the description of the seven churches in Asia Minor can also be like different types of communities in the Church! If we follow this trail, then we would be dealing with a community with material prosperity, but poor in its

spiritual strength! But she does not even notice this state of affairs, for it is precisely this wealth that gives her a kind of security that is an illusion! Perhaps such a community is even given an influence on other communities through its wealth, and therefore takes a position that it does not deserve! Spiritually speaking, however, she belongs to those who are far from God! This corresponds to the state of lukewarmness: there are no clear contours, no real fire, a bending according to the current of the time, an inability to swim against the current! The state of lukewarmness is spiritually a miserable and very worrying state!

It is striking that the Lord does not mention any good deeds in this church to which one should return! He calls for urgent repentance and a complete turning to him! He will only be able to bring this church back to life if it perceives its riches in God, if it sees with His eyes - in the anointing of the Holy Spirit - and does not remain blind because it has taken over the vision of the world. It must wash the baptismal robe in the blood of the Lamb (*cf. Rev 7:14b*) and thus renew its garment of grace!

The conversion to God is urgent and no time must be lost! Even the church in Laodicea, whose condition is so worrying, is offered a way by God! “*so repent in real earnest*” the Lord says! The invitation is present, but it must not be missed!