**A Church’s Reputation**

Jesus knows the seven churches of the book of Revelation. Not one church was praised for being “a large congregation”, and Jesus does not rebuke one church for being “a small congregation”. In addition, Jesus does not praise one church for being “a numerically growing church”, nor does he rebuke a church for losing it’s members. [Actually they should have lost some members they were tolerating, like Jezebel (2:20) and Balaam (2:14)]. Jesus is consistent with God’s view on mere numbers in the Old Testament. King David was rebuked by God when he wanted to number the army (2Chron. 21, 2Sam. 24). People tend to trust numbers more than God. So we too must stop focusing on numbers.

Secondly, a church’s reputation among other churches doesn’t matter to God either. Jesus addressing the church in Sardis, “I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.” (Rev. 3:1). We are not told why they had a good reputation in town or among other churches. Sardis’ name, or reputation was that they were a church that was “alive”. It makes me think of rock bands and party atmosphere we see in some churches. A church may make some noise, but maybe they are just snoring. “Wake up… wake up” (3:2,3), he says to this church, Sardis.

Thirdly, the reason Jesus thinks they are “dead” (Rev. 3:1), is because of their “deeds” (3:2). This upsets many churches today because they don’t want to be judged by their “deeds”, but only their “faith”. They emphasize faith in exclusion to “deeds”. They simply cannot comprehend that Jesus would say, “I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God.” (3:2). So, what are we missing? What does Jesus expect his people should be doing? He expects “works, deeds”.

Fourthly, this church had, “a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.” Have I stayed pure? Does Jesus think I am “worthy”? I need to become such in his estimation. Will Jesus walk everywhere I walk, see, think, speak throughout each day? Holiness and godliness matter to Jesus.

Last of all, if there were some in Sardis who were guilty of a soiled garment or spiritually asleep, they can “repent” (3:3). They must “overcome”. Jesus says, “He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels” (3:5). Will Sardis now live up to their good name? Will Jesus repeat their name before God? I hope so, and your’s too. Let’s give him a reason to do so!

 Dan Peters