

Revelation of Jesus Christ Study 19

Rev 3:1-6

1 "To the angel of the church in Sardis write: He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars, says this: 'I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.

2 ~'Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God.

3 ~'So remember what you have received and heard; and keep it, and repent. Therefore if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you.

4 ~'But you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.

5 ~' 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.

6 ~' He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

One of the first things that I want to address is a mistake that I made last week when giving you the information on the speed of light, some of you here caught it, I somehow transposed the original information that I received from the speed of light being 186,000 miles per second to 186,000 miles per hour. So the correction is as follows;

The speed of light is 186,000 miles per second, and 693,600,000 miles per hour, and that is according to some of our folks who did the research this last week. So I thank them for the correction and the right information.

Last week we took up the study of this letter to Sardis from our Lord through the Apostle John and to the angel of the church.

We again looked at the correspondent, Jesus Christ Himself, and we looked at the Church which our Lord said was dead, and we looked at the city of Sardis, its location and its conquerors. We also listened to the concern of the Lord about this church. He called for repentance, for restoration of things needed to bring it back to life, and the judgement that would be coming if they did not repent.

So this week we will look at the:

Commendation

The Command

The Counsel

Outlined by the Lord of the Church. He who holds the angels of the church in His right hand and who walks among the churches and knows all about them.

Rev 3:4

4 ~'But you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.

THE COMMENDATION

In the midst of this dead church, filled with unregenerate people, a **few** true Christians were scattered like flowers in a desert.

There were not enough of them, however, to change Christ's overall evaluation of the church as dead.

But He had not forgotten those who remained faithful to Him

Mal 3:16-17

16 Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD gave attention and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who esteem His name.

17 "They will be Mine," says the LORD of hosts, "on the day that I prepare My own possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him."

Heb 6:10

10 For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints.

That God preserves His faithful remnant is a frequent theme of Scripture.

Rom 11:1-5

1 I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.

2 God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel?

3 "Lord, THEY HAVE KILLED YOUR PROPHETS, THEY HAVE TORN DOWN YOUR ALTARS, AND I ALONE AM LEFT, AND THEY ARE SEEKING MY LIFE."

4 But what is the divine response to him? " I HAVE KEPT for Myself SEVEN THOUSAND MEN WHO HAVE NOT BOWED THE KNEE TO BAAL."

5 In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice

God had His remnant even in the dead church at Sardis.

There were a few sincere among the hypocrites, a few humble among the proud, a few separated among the worldly, and a few stalks of wheat among the tares.

Christ describes them as those **who have not soiled their garments.**

Soiled is from *moluno*, which means "to stain," "to defile," "to smear," or "to pollute."

It was a word that would be familiar to the readers at Sardis because of the city's wool dyeing industry.

Garments symbolized character in Scripture:

Isa64:6; Jude 21-23

6 For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; And all of us wither like a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.

21 keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life.

22 And have mercy on some, who are doubting;

23 save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.

The faithful remnant could come into God's presence because they had not defiled or polluted themselves, but manifested their godly character.

Specifically, Christ says of them that they will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.

In ancient times, such garments were worn for celebrations and festivals. Because they refused to defile their garments, Christ would replace those humanly preserved clean garments with divinely pure ones

Rev 7:14

14 I said to him, "My lord, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

The white robes of purity Christ promises here and in verse 5 are elsewhere worn by Christ Himself

Matt 17:2; Mark 9:3

2 And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light.

3 and His garments became radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on earth can whiten them.

And the Holy Angels at His resurrection and ascension:

Matt 28:3; Mark 16:5; Acts 1:10

3 And his appearance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow.

5 Entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting at the right, wearing a white robe; and they were amazed.

10 And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them

Those who have a measure of holiness and purity now will be given perfect holiness and purity in the future.

THE COMMAND

Rev 3:2a-3

2 ~'Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die;

3 ~'So remember what you have received and heard; and keep it, and repent. Therefore if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you.

Christ addressed the command to the faithful remnant of true Christians at Sardis; there is no point in talking to those who are dead.

If the church is to survive it desperately needed life.

Christ laid out for them the path to spiritual restoration by giving them five steps to follow.

1. They needed to **wake up**. There was no time for indifference; they could not just go with the flow, they had to reverse it.

The believing remnant had to look at what was happening in their church, evaluate the situation, get involved in changing things, confront sin and error, and make a difference.

2. They needed to **strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die**. **Things** is a neuter noun in the Greek and does not refer to people, but to spiritual realities. Christ exhorted the true Christians at Sardis to fan into flame the dying embers of the remaining spiritual graces in their church.
3. The third step was for the faithful remnant to **remember what** they had **received and heard**. they needed to go back to the truths of the Word of God, remembering the gospel and the teachings of the apostles.

Paul's letters were in circulation:

2 Pet 3:15-16

15 and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you,

16 as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.

And the rest of the New Testament had been written.

The believers at Sardis needed to re-affirm their belief in the truth about Christ, sin, salvation, and sanctification.

In the words of Paul to Timothy, they needed to guard what had been entrusted to them

1 Tim 6:20

20 O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding worldly and empty chatter and the opposing arguments of what is falsely called "knowledge"—

They needed to establish a solid doctrinal foundation to serve as a base for renewal.

4. Having gone back to the basics of Scripture, they needed to **keep** them. Orthodox theology apart from obedient lives would not bring about renewal
5. They needed to repent. With remorse and sorrow, the believers at Sardis were to confess and turn away from their sins.

These five steps, if diligently practiced, would bring about revival.

The consequences if revival did not come would be severe.

Christ warned them **if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you.**

The picture of Jesus coming **like a thief** always carries the idea of imminent judgment

Matt 24:32-44

42 "Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming.

43 "But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into.

44 "For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will

1 Thess 5:2-4

2 For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night.

3 While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape.

4 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief;

Rev 16:15

15 ("Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame.")

The Lord would come and destroy the Sardis church if there were no revival. This can be extrapolated into a warning of the judgment that faces all dead churches at Christ return.

THE COUNSEL

Rev 3:5-6

5 ~' 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.

6 ~' He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

By way of encouragement, Christ described the rewards awaiting those who participated in the revival.

True Christians, as already noted, will **be clothed in white garments.**

In the ancient world, **white garments** were also worn for festive occasions such as weddings.

True Christians will wear theirs at the marriage supper of the Lamb

Rev 19:7-9

7 "Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready."

8 It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

*9 Then he *said to me, " Write, ' Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" And he *said to me, " These are true words of God."*

White robes were also worn by those celebrating victory in battle; all true Christians are victorious through Christ over sin, death, and Satan. But as noted earlier in the discussion of verse four, primarily believers' **white garments** represent purity and holiness.

Christ promises to clothe Christians in the brilliance of eternal purity and holiness.

Christ further promises every true Christian that He **will not erase his name from the book of life**, but will **confess his name before the Father and before His angels**.

In Johns day rulers kept a register of the citizens of a city. If someone died or committed a serious crime, their name was erased from that register.

Christ the King of heaven, promises never to erase a true Christian's name from the roll of those whose names were *"written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain"* (Rev 13:8) Read

On the contrary, Christ will confess every believer's name before God the Faather and before His angels.

He will affirm that they belong to Him.

Here Christ reaffirms the promise He made during His earthly ministry.

Matt 10:32

32 "Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven.

The comforting truth that true Christians' salvation is eternally secure is the unmistakable teaching of Scripture. Nowhere is that truth more strongly stated than in:

Romans 8:28-39

28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

29 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;

30 and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?

32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

33 Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies;

34 who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

35 Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

36 Just as it is written, " FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED."

37 But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.

38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,

39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The letter to Sardis ends, like the other six, with an exhortation to heed the counsel, commands, and promises it contains:

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

The spiritually dead zombies in the church at Sardis needed to heed the warning of impending judgment.

The indifferent believers needed to wake up before it was too late to save their church.

The faithful few could take comfort in the knowledge that their salvation was eternally secure.

What happened to Sardis? Did they heed the warning? Did Revival come?

That such a prominent man as Melito served as bishop of Sardis several decades after John wrote argues that at least some revival took place in Sardis. Until Christ returns, it is not too late for other dead churches to find the path to spiritual renewal.