

Today we continue our study in Jesus' letters to seven churches, kept for us in Revelation chapters 2 and 3. Today we study the 5th letter:

Revelation 3:1-6

Jesus said: Write to the announcer for the church in the city named SARDIS:

[quote]

I hold the seven spirits of God and seven stars. I tell you:

I know what you do.

People say that you live, but really you are dead.

² Wake up! What you still have, make that strong again.

If you ignore that, what you have will die.

All that My God wants you to-do, you are not-yet doing.

³ Remember everything you already received and learned.

Obey, and change your hearts and lives.

If you don't wake up,

I will come same-as a thief.

You will not know the time I will come.

⁴ But you have a few people in SARDIS

that keep their clothes clean, without sin.

They will walk with me, dressed in white,

because they are worthy.

⁵ Every person that wins will also dress in white.

I will never remove your names from the Book of Life.

I will announce your names

before *[in-front-of]* my Father and His angels.

⁶ My Holy Spirit now speaks to your churches.

Every person must pay-attention.

SARDIS,

That city in western Turkey was big and rich.

That city had a wonderful REPUTATION [name].

The Christian church in SARDIS was big, busy, popular,
and also had a wonderful reputation.

People really enjoyed that church.

But Jesus had a different view.

Our Lord begins His letter to SARDIS: [quote]

I hold the seven spirits of God, and seven stars.

Seven Stars? We already found what that means:

Jesus said that the seven stars means

the announcers for the seven churches in ASIA.

We name those announcers "preachers."

But the Seven Spirits of God? What's that mean?

If you look in your Bible to this verse,

you maybe will find a footnote that says,

"SEVENFOLD Spirit of God."

Meaning:

Jesus doesn't have Seven different spirits [...spirit ...spirit].

No, Jesus has only one Holy Spirit,

and that Holy Spirit has seven different gifts.

The Old Testament prophet, named ISAIAH, says:

[quote]

The family tree for JESSE [David's father],

finished cut-down, leaving a STUMP,

From that STUMP will grow a New Branch,

a new king will come.

*On that King will rest
[1] the Spirit of the Lord.
The Holy Spirit gives
[2] wisdom,
[3] understanding,
[4] guidance [leading],
[5] power,
[6] knowledge,
[7] respect for the LORD. (Isaiah 11:1,2)*

And through the Holy Spirit, Christ gives these gifts to His church.

Now, to the church in Sardis, Jesus said:

*[quote]
I know what you do.
People say that you live.*

Notice that church in Sardis, had no persecution. None!
People in that city saw the Christian group... Impressive!
That church was growing. People were joining the church.
Wonderful! That church really lived!

But Jesus saw that church through different eyes. He said:

*[quote]
People say that you live,
but really you are dead.*

We can guess that church acted more like a social CLUB, and not a true church that preached Good News about Jesus Christ.

We see here in SARDIS a picture of [quote] "a real American Church:"

The church had:

Many members.

Big staff.

Many programs.

Many fellowship groups.

A busy church.

A feel-good church.

That church made other churches feel jealous.

Today that church maybe you can see on TV every week.

Today that church maybe has a wonderful WEB SITE.

But if you look inside that church,
you see members that are no different
than non-Christians in the world.

That church doesn't impress Jesus.
He sees a church that has almost no spiritual life.
He sees a religious organization,
but not a church that honors Him.

Jesus said,
*All that My God wants you to-do,
you are not-yet doing.*

They may-be a busy church,
but they are not paying-attention-to HIS business.

Jesus gives that church four commands:

Wake up!

[2] Remember!

[3] Obey!

[4] REPENT!

[1] Wake up!

Stop believing a lie, and start seeing the truth!

[2] Remember!

In-the-past God taught His Word to you.

Don't forget! Remember!

[3] Obey

Christians today don't like that word: "Obey."

Why not?

Maybe we have[finish] become
same-as the church in SARDIS.

[4] REPENT

That means turn from our sins,
and look to God.

Become honest and admit our wrongs.

Trust Christ to forgive us, and change us.

And, yes, change our church!

Jesus warned [quote],

*"If you don't wake up,
I will come same-as a thief."*

What's that mean???

Jesus will come and steal something? No.

Jesus often uses that same picture about a thief,
talking about His judgment.

His judgment is same-as a thief, how?

Jesus explains [quote]:

*I will come same-as a thief.
You will not know the time I will come.*

If someone wants to steal from you,
will the thief call you and make an appointment?

No! That's silly.
You learn about the thief's plans....
too-late,
and "too-bad."

Our Lord's judgment is same way.

If that church is a continuous party,
one day they will wake-up... too-late,
and find the party is over[finished].

Jesus didn't have happy words for the church in SARDIS.
Sorry.

But He had praise for a few true Christians in that church.
Jesus said [quote],

*But you have a few people in SARDIS
that keep their clothes clean, without sin.
They will walk with me, dressed in white,
because they are worthy.*

The church in that city seemed careless about sin.
But these Christians saw sin
same-as God sees sin.
And they understood what to do about sin.

The Bible tells us [quote],
*If we say, "I have no sin,"
we are fooling ourselves,
and truth is not in us.
But if we confess our sins,
God will forgive our sins,
and He will clean us,*

removing all our wrong doing. (1 John 1:8,9)

Jesus could really say about those true Christians in SARDIS,
"They are worthy," because HE made them worthy.

Another way we can say the same thing:

They are good enough. Why?

Because Jesus forgave them.

That's what made them good!

Notice the picture that Jesus uses [quote],

"They will walk with me, dressed in white."

and

"Every person that wins will also dress in white."

Later in Revelation we see again a picture of God's people dressed in white ROBES, ...robes we get only from Jesus.

That picture means: Jesus covers us with His holy life.

We are not holy in ourselves. We know that.

But Jesus makes us holy through His suffering and death on the cross. He accepted our sin on Himself.

and in exchange, He names us holy and perfect!

Now, when our Father in heaven looks-at us,

He sees,

not our sin.

No, He sees only

the holy life, and the holy sacrifice,

of His Son, Jesus.

That white ROBE you wear,

That's Jesus' robe.

That's HIS life that covers you.

Now, Jesus says [quote],
*I will never remove your names
from the Book of Life.*

Only God's GRACE, His love, His gift,
writes your name in His book.

And Jesus says that He will never remove our names from His
book. But can we remove our names ourselves? Yes.
Only our refusal to believe,
only our rejection of His gift,
that will remove our names from His book.

Finally, to those who trust and know Him, Jesus says [quote],

*I will announce your names
before[in-front-of] my Father and His angels.*

Many times through the Bible, Jesus says that promise again and
again.

Our Lord will not only welcome us into His heaven,
He will announce our names with joy. (Luke 15:10)
He will announce our names,
telling the Father to remember
the sacrifice He[Jesus] paid for us on the cross.
(Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25; 1 John 2:1)

Let us hold-on to that wonderful truth,
and never let it go!

We pray:

Lord Jesus,

Often in our church,

*we think that growing big is important,
forgetting that you want us
first to grow deep...*

deep in Your Word,

deep in time for prayer with You,

deep in our service for other people.

We know that we are not good enough,

but you already forgave us.

You covered us

with Your holy life,

and Your holy sacrifice.

Thank you for writing our names in Your book.

As you announce our names to Your Father,

help us announce Your name to the world.

Amen.