

Revelation 3:1- The Sardis Social Club

1

In one of my college courses the history Professor talked about moving to a city like Athens and if you wanted to make important contacts in the community you might go to a significant downtown search such as And he then named the church where I grew up and attended. He understood that many churches had become little more than a social club. A secularized social club is not a biblical church.

3-7

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.'

Harvard's mission statement

<https://answersingenesis.org/blogs/georgia-purdum/2011/10/11/harvard-no-longer-truth-for-christ-and-the-church/>

<https://thoughtfortheweek-jeff.blogspot.com/2014/01/harvard-universitys-original-purpose.html>

9

Let every Student be plainly instructed, and earnestly pressed to consider well, the main end of his life and studies is, to know God and Jesus Christ which is eternal life (John 17:3) and therefore to lay Christ in the bottom, as the only foundation of all sound knowledge and Learning.

That could have been the mission statement of the Sardis Church, but not any longer. The church appears to be getting no persecution because they had become irrelevant. The church married to its culture will soon find itself a widow. The push generally tends for a church to accommodate the culture in order to not wither away and die. But if you look at denominations that have been the most accommodating to culture, they are the ones that are dying. If you have no message to give to the culture other than moralistic therapeutic deism, then people figure out they don't need to go to church to hear what they can hear on Oprah or at a local Civic Club.

11

- ❖ DESCRIPTION OF Jesus
- ❖ What He knows
- ❖ REBUKE with Exhortations:
 - WAKE UP
 - STRENGTHEN THE THINGS THAT REMAIN
 - REMEMBER WHAT YOU RECEIVED AND HEARD

12

- ❖ WARNING
- ❖ PROMISE TO OVERCOMERS

A word about SARDIS (modern day Turkey... skinny jeans and sun glasses)

IT was important as a military outpost and its location leading from the interior area to the Aegean coast.

14



It was the place where they first learned how to separate gold from silver, thus coming up with a purity of each metal that was new. The phrase “rich as Croesus” was born because he was king of that area at the time. Sardis is where modern currency was invented. It was a very rich city, but because of an earthquake in 17 AD, it had declined by the time the book of Revelation was written. Though they could take pride in their glorious past, now they were dead.

16 **DESCRIPTION OF Jesus**

He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars

The ‘seven spirits’ is Revelation language for ‘fullness of the Spirit’.

Here in this opening to the church of Sardis Jesus holds forth the possibility of revival for the believers.

They need revival because of ‘what He knows’.

What He knows

18 **“You have a name that you are alive, but you are dead”**

The Christians in Sardis could star in the hit series “The Walking Dead”. They were spiritual zombies.

They may have had a glorious past, but now they are dead.

“Their worship center was a mortuary, not a sanctuary.” (Jeff Hamm)

That is a very direct statement coming from the Lord. Jesus isn’t beating around the bush. TOO MUCH IS AT STAKE.

Do we recognize that? I don’t think so.

Our tendency is to think, “I’ll get things sorted out when I’m older, when I get married, when we have kids, when the kids are grown, when we have grandkids, before I die.” OOPS, TOO LATE.

We don’t know when our soul will be required to give an account.

Jesus can get away with it, but often people don’t like it when the God ordained leaders in a church are that direct.

20 **REBUKE with EXHORTATIONS:**

Responses to this sort of rebuke:

- Listen and respond by doing what is said – the movement of faith
- Listen without responding – “ear service” but no heart movement
- Don’t listen – no change – obstinate disobedience that usually won’t end well
- Leave before the rebuke comes – escape and blame

23 **WAKE UP**

Keep your eyes and ears open for a critical enjoyment of culture with an appropriate wariness

VoV – “Fall not asleep on Delilah’s lap”

Don’t be naïve about the end game of a godless worldview. Not everyone knows or is pushing the secular end of an agenda, but someone is. Satan is a liar and the father of lies; he prowls about like a roaring lion seeking whom he can devour.

Typically, the lion devours those who are weak and isolated from the herd.

Are you going to be on the devil’s menu? The baby gazelle can’t help being weak, but we can. We have been given the means of grace to that we might grow strong in faith. Even when we fail and don’t avail ourselves of what God has for us, we still have access to the throne of grace.

The simple prayer, “God help” is the movement of faith in the right direction. We ignore it at our own peril. There are few things that Satan loves more than a Christian who isolates him or herself from the body of Christ. That is a self-inflicted wound, an unforced error. It is small steps in the wrong direction.

You may think it is no big deal, but Jesus says, “WAKE UP”.

	<p>The book of Revelation is about a HOPE UNVEILED. The Hope is needed because a grand conspiracy is also unveiled. The dragon, the beast, Satan, and Babylon have designs on taking down Christ and His people. They are playing for blood; they are playing for keeps. EX: Passion of the Christ – Satan in the crowd as Christ is being scourged “It’s Friday, but Sunday’s Coming”</p> <p>They thought they won when the Lamb was slain, but they didn’t know that Jesus was also playing for keeps.</p>
25	<p>v.2 STRENGTHEN THE THINGS THAT REMAIN Despite the dire diagnosis from Jesus, there is HOPE. They can still reverse the direction of their spiritual lives. As Miracle Max in The Princess Bride says, “they are only mostly dead, and there is a big difference between mostly dead and all dead!”</p>
27	<p>Jesus gives a diagnosis and a REMEDY : Wake up, strengthen the things that remain... We strengthen our hearts by grace. Heb 13:9 Do not be misled by varied and strange teachings; for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, through which those who were so occupied were not benefited.</p> <p>“strengthen” is ACTIVE IMPERATIVE 2nd P PI – “ya’ll”. It is a communal effort. Don’t try this at home by yourself. We are not called to live the Christian life alone. **COMMUNITY GROUP SURVEY**</p> <p>...”the things that are about to die” – not a cheerful word, but quite sobering. Some things still remain in the church that is “dead” v. 1. If they are not strengthened, they will die as well.</p> <p>EX: Have you been to great historic churches with beautiful buildings that are basically empty on Sunday? The “Christian west” is littered with such buildings, many of which are now museums, and some have been converted to mosques. They didn’t die overnight, they slowly gave way to the culture and forgot where their strength came from – THE GOSPEL.</p>
29	<p>REMEMBER WHAT YOU RECEIVED AND HEARD . 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.</p> <p>WARNING v. 3 Sardis was a fortified city on a high hill; it was thought to be impregnable. But twice in history the city was assaulted by stealth at night, once by the Greeks, once by the Persians. There was a lack of vigilance because the city was overconfident. They didn’t learn from the first attack. IT CAN’T HAPPEN TO ME, TO MY MARRIAGE, MY FAMILY, MY CHURCH, MY NATION. REALLY? Those are famous last words.</p> <p>How does this happen to a church? Where is the point of no return?</p>
31	<p>We don’t know the point of no return, but we do know that typically, it happens slowly because of a lack of vigilance, a failure to keep the Main thing the MAIN THING, and spiritual forgetfulness. The sobering thing is that from an external perspective Sardis was asymptomatic. There was no evidence of Jezebel or the Nicolaitans leading people astray. Even the ‘soiled’ garments weren’t clearly defined as acts of immorality or idolatry. A lack of vigilance for the truth of God and the life of faith are AS DEADLY as outward heresy. In both instances the church ends up at odds with Christ.</p> <p>Argument from silence – no mention of trials and persecution.</p>

Is it because the church was not seen as a threat to the status quo of the culture? They left no impact. They had no voice that rose against the issues of the day. They weren't worth persecuting; there was no need for it. The Sardis church was a spiritual gelding.

EX: the example of Harvard, Yale, Dartmouth, etc

EX: Mohler 10-11-21 religious 'nones' Show the slow decline in America. Like the church of Sardis, it is easier to accommodate culture than to stand out with a clear profession backed by action.

USA Today. This headline is this, "Millions Giving Up Organized Religion." The subhead, "America's fast-growing movement, the Nones"--N-O-N-E-S--"as in no religious affiliation.

Linda Mercadante, identified as a retired theology professor at the Methodist Theological School in Ohio, spoke of spirituality as the new mandate, "America has a long religious heritage so won't be thrown out soon. Instead, it will be replaced by a more vague spirituality." She went on to say, "A lot of people won't say the word God because that's not popular, but they will say universe." ... The most important sentence in the entire article is this, "It's more socially acceptable today to identify as a none, sociologists note."

There is less pushback, fewer awkward stares or raised eyebrows when we say, "no religious affiliation." If a cultural Christian is inclined to not identify with Christ, then this letter to Sardis indicates that Christ will not identify with him/her. (Matt 10:32-33)

THIS WARNING TO SARDIS WAS AN ACT OF KINDNESS FROM Christ. He was giving them time to repent and turn things around. There was still room for HOPE for those who have ears to hear.

GOOD NEWS FROM SARDIS

Church history records the life and work of Melito, the Bishop of Sardis following the time of this letter. In the latter part of the 2nd century, he pastored the church of Sardis for about 50 years. It would appear they did wake up and strengthen the things that remained.

PROMISE TO OVERCOMERS v 4ff

33 There are some in Sardis who remain in unsoiled garments. The contrast is between the soiled garments of the majority and the white garments of the faithful. It is difficult to remain unstained by the world if you are not AWAKE and vigilant. The message, seduction, and pressure from the world just keeps coming. It doesn't stop. If it's not the world from without, then we must deal with our own hearts from within. Prov 4:23 Guard your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life.

35 v. 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.**

The book of life is contrasted with the book of citizens maintained by Roman cities.

This verse has caused some debates about names being erased from the book of life. If this were the only text that spoke about assurance and perseverance and the saving power of God, then one might be led to think you can lose salvation. But the rest of scripture teaches otherwise.

"All that the Father gives to the Son will be saved." John 6

The 'book of life' is a repeated theme in Revelation, as is perseverance, holding fast, and overcoming. One way to look at this 'name in the book' issue is like this:

There are names that are NEVER in the book.

There are names that are there but are later erased.

There are names that are there and stay there.

The middle option would be those who Jesus refers to as the ones in soiled garments, who are in the church by are the walking dead. They have done what was needed to be put on the roll of the church, but

	<p>there was never any true knowledge of Christ. Their lives indicate that they are taking the “name of the Lord in vain.” They have some sort of profession, but they are dead or are about to die. The warning is given as a motivation to see to it that our names are NOT erased from the book of life.</p>
37	<p>Jesus knows those who are his, whom the Father has given Him, and He will confess their names before the Father and the angels. Our faith is meant to be ALIVE and to be lived out in our daily lives – at home, work, play, etc. We have been given a light and we must not hide it under a bushel – NO</p>
	<p>DO YOU WANT TO BE AN OVERCOMER? Jesus tells us how: Strengthen what remains and remember what you have received. Recognize, remember, and meditate on the Privileges that are our in Christ.</p>
39	<p>VOV Privileges- READ RESPONSIVELY the words of the refrain ...”in Him...” How great are my privileges in Christ Jesus! Without Him I stand far off, a stranger, an outcast; <u>in Him I draw near and touch his kingly sceptre.</u></p>
40	<p>Without Him I dare not lift up my guilty eyes; <u>in Him I gaze upon my Father-God and Friend.</u> Without Him I hide my lips in trembling shame; <u>in Him I open my mouth in petition and praise.</u></p>
41	<p>Without Him all is wrath and consuming fire; <u>in Him is all love, and the repose of my soul.</u> Without Him is gaping hell below me, and eternal anguish; <u>in Him its gates are barred to me by his precious blood.</u></p>
42	<p>Without Him all things external call for my condemnation; <u>in Him they minister to my comfort and are to be enjoyed with thanksgiving.</u></p>
43	<p>ALL TOGETHER: Praise be to thee for grace, and for the unspeakable gift of Jesus.</p>

--	--