

THE REVELATION

The Things that Are – Part 3

LOOK UP! CHRIST IS COMING SOON! HALLELUJAH!

Today, we will study a church that was dead – Sardis. Some call it a sleeping church but Jesus called it dead. Sardis was a very important city. It was a military center because it was located on an almost inaccessible plateau. Nevertheless, twice in its long history, the citadel at Sardis had been captured, each time because sentries had failed to do their jobs faithfully. Reminding us, it is when the church's leaders and members get accustomed to their blessings and complacent about their ministry that the enemy finds his way in.

Read Revelation 3:1 (ESV) ¹ *“And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: ‘The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. ‘I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead.*”

In the letter to Sardis, we are reminded of the seven spirits of God. Isaiah prophesied regarding the seven spirits. **Isaiah 11:2** lists the Seven Spirits:

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| (1) <i>the Spirit of the LORD,</i> | (5) <i>and might,</i> |
| (2) <i>the Spirit of wisdom</i> | (6) <i>the Spirit of knowledge and</i> |
| (3) <i>and understanding,</i> | (7) <i>the fear of the LORD.</i> |
| (4) <i>the Spirit of counsel</i> | |

When Jesus was baptized the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in a special way. **Matthew 3:16-17 (ESV)** ¹⁶ *And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him;* ¹⁷ *and behold, a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.’”*

The Life Application Bible explains that this verse is the doctrine of the Trinity. The Trinity is one of those words that is not found in the Bible but is used to express the unity of God in three distinct Persons. God is three Persons and yet one in essence. In **Matthew 3:16-17**, all three persons of the Trinity are present and active. God the Father speaks; God the Son is baptized; God the Holy Spirit descends on Jesus. God is one, yet in three persons at the same time.

When the Holy Spirit takes up residence in the heart of the believer, Christ calls us to faithfulness to Him. Let us be ever mindful of our Lord’s admonition to the people of Sardis, *“you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead.”*

If we are to be like Jesus, we must be alive. **Matthew 28:6 (ESV)** ⁶ *He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay.* Jesus said to the church of Sardis, the same thing the Holy Spirit is whispering to us today, *“wake up!”*

Read Revelation 3:2-3 (ESV) ² *Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God.* ³ *Remember, then, what you*

received and heard. Keep it, and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you.

In reminding His people at Sardis that He would come as a thief if they did not change their ways, Christ was not speaking of the Rapture or the Second Coming. He was speaking of a present judgment where they would lose something. The church at Ephesus was warned that if they did not return to their First Love, the lampstand (their witness) would be removed from their midst. He warned Pergamum that He would fight against them with the sword of His mouth (meaning the Word of God). The warning to Sardis was for them to watch. They were to be awake and alert and meet their responsibilities or else they would reap the consequences. We have the same problem today. Many in our churches do not realize that the Holy Spirit is visiting us with power and that we must appropriate that power while it is available. We may think that the message to Sardis applies to some other church. But God is speaking to the fundamental church of today, the Bible believing church. There is a drift among congregations towards being spiritually ineffective. Remember that when the power of God left Samson, Samson didn't know it.

Seamstresses love to find good remnants of material. It is exciting to carpet a small room at a good price by finding a remnant of the "perfect" carpet. You may be able to tile a small bathroom or entryway with a few "leftover" pieces of ceramic tile. Our God is also in the remnant business!

Read Revelation 3:4-6 (ESV) ⁴ *Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments, and they will walk with me in white, for they are worthy.* ⁵ *The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. 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.'*

There was a remnant of people in Sardis still serving God. Even today we may get it into our head that we are the only ones serving God and this is just not true. There was a time in the life of the great Old Testament prophet, Elijah, when he became very depressed. In his depression, he allowed himself to believe the Devil's lie that he was the only one serving God. **1 Kings 19:11-12)**

The Lord revealed to Elijah that there were 7,000 in Israel who were not worshipping a false god. Elijah was not alone! The Holy Spirit whispers the same to us, "*Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.*" We can be alive in the middle of dead church.

Jesus said, of the remnant of His followers in Sardis: *I will never blot his name out of the book of life.* Over the years most of us have heard bits and pieces regarding the *book of life*. Old Testament prophet Daniel wrote in **Daniel 12:1 (ESV)** ¹ "*At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never*

has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book.

The *book of life* is the heavenly record mentioned by Jesus in **Luke 10:20 (ESV)**²⁰ *Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”*

Is there a warning here that a true believer might lose his/her salvation? I agree with Warren Wiersbe who does not think so. It would appear that God’s *Book of Life* contains the names of all the living, the wicked as well as the righteous. **Psalm 69:28 (ESV)**²⁸ *Let them be blotted out of the book of the living; let them not be enrolled among the righteous.*

The names of the saved and the unsaved are written in the book from the foundation of the world—that is, before they had done anything good or bad.

If the names of believers (the elect) are written down from the foundation of the world, and if God knows all things, why would He enter the name of somebody who would one day fall and have to be removed from the book? Just as the Lord knows the exact number of the hairs on our head, He knows about every human being – those who accept Him and those who don’t.

As unbelievers die, their names are removed from the book; thus, at the final judgment, the book contains only the names of believers. **Revelation 20:15 (ESV)**¹⁵ *And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*

It then becomes the *Lamb’s Book of Life*, **Revelation 21:27 (ESV)**²⁷ *But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life.* Only those saved by the Lord Jesus Christ have their names in it. All the others have been blotted out, something God would never do for any true child of God. It is a *book of life*, and lost sinners are *dead*. **Ephesians 2:1 (ESV)**¹ *And you were dead in the trespasses and sins.*

The warning here is that we not grow comfortable in our churches, lest we find ourselves slowly dying. The encouragement is that no church is beyond hope as long as there is a remnant in it, willing to strengthen the things that remain.

Christ said to the remnant at Sardis: *they will walk with me in white, for they are worthy.* All the creatures of God except man have a natural covering. I look at my own cats sometimes and think how beautiful their coats are. They never have to worry about what they are going to wear! The covering that God intended for man was His own glory, but this was lost when man sinned. Some fine day, the new robe provided for us in Christ Jesus will be a glorious covering provided by our Lord Himself!