

Revelation 3:1 (Sardis)

11/22/15

Sunday Morning

Review:

V.1 (NASB) The Revelation ^(unveiling) of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John,

V.3 *Blessed is he who reads and those who hear* the words of the prophecy, and *heed* the things which are written in it; for the time is near.

- 1) "Blessed is he who reads and those who hear... heed the things...written"
 - a) The only book w/ a promise like this

V.4 John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne,

V.5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood—

V.6 and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father—to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

V.8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

V.10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet,

V.11 saying, "Write in a book what you see, and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."

V.12 Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands;

V.13 and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash.

V.14 His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire.

V.15 His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters.

V.16 In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength.

V.17 When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last,

V.18 and the living One; and I was ^(became) dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.

V.19 (NP)

V.19 "Therefore write the things which you #1 *have seen*, and the things #2 *which are*, and the things which #3 *will take place after these things*.

- 1) "which you have seen...which are...will take place after these things"
 - a) "which you have seen" – He had seen **the glorified Christ**
 - b) "which are" – the seven churches
 - c) "which will take place after these things" – **Chapter 4** thru **22**

V.20 "As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: **the seven stars are** the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

3:1 "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.'

V.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.

V.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.

V.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.

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.

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

We are looking at the Church age:

Rev.3:1 "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.*

- 1) "To the angel of the church in **Sardis** write"
 - a) City was founded at the beginning of the iron age – 1100 to 1200 BC
 - b) It was the capital of the Lydian kingdom
 - c) From the **Greek view** Sardis was one of the **greatest of all cities**.
 - d) It was however much like a robber's stronghold b/c of the mountains that were there
 - i) Robbers would swoop in on their victims & head back to the mountains where they could easily hide
 - ii) This has meaning a little later on
 - e) From the Roman view Sardis was a relic of the past – a time of barbaric warfare, which lived on past reputation / prestige.
 - f) Sardis was built on a small plateau

- i) As the city grew larger it ran out of room & a lower city was built expanded to the west, north & possibly on the east side of original city – on lower plain
- ii) Sardis was in truth 2 cities
- iii) The original became a citadel^(fortress) for the other city although they were together considered one city
- iv) Because of this the name Sardis is written in plural form
- g) The plateau Sardis was built on was a finger of land w/ sheer cliffs on 3 sides 1000' high
 - i) It was unassailable on 3 sides
- h) At the base cliffs flowed the Pactolus River which acted as a mote
- i) It was inaccessible except at one area from the south
 - i) On all other sides: smooth rock – nearly perpendicular – unscalable
 - ii) They didn't even defend those sides even when under siege
 - iii) A boy could stand on the plateau & drop small rocks on anyone trying to scale those cliffs & defend it
- j) Sardis was a secure city w/out worries
- k) There was a huge synagogue 3 times the one in Palestine – there that was 400' x60'
- l) There was the temple of Apolos & Cybele (Diana of Ephesians)
- m) Because of its location (east to west commerce) flowing thru it – became a wealthy city
- n) It was also made wealthy by textile manufacturing and jewelry making
- o) The first coins of the world were minted there from gold & silver
 - i) Among an impressionable people like the Greeks thought so much of Sardis that they inscribed on the coins – "Sardis the First Metropolis of of Asia, and of Lydia and of Hellenism"
- p) It was ruled by a series of "Princes" the last prince of Sardis was Croesus
 - i) Croesus – who was considered the wealthiest man in the world
- q) The story is told that when Cyrus attacked the city in 549 BC and having been repulsed, offered a reward to any soldier who could figure out how to gain access to Sardis
- r) A Persian soldier saw a Lydian soldier drop his helmet & scale down the cliffs, using the cracks in the rocks, to retrieve it & knew there was a way to ascend the walls
- s) Sardis was captured by Cyrus the Persian in 549 BC – thus ruled by the Persians
- t) When the Greeks conquered the Medes, Sardis was ruled by the Greeks
- u) After the death of Alexander one of his generals named Antigonus captured city in 322BC – Attalid dynasty
- v) Then in 218 BC overtaken by Antiochus the Great (Seleucid Empire)

- w) Sardis was destroyed by an earthquake 17 AD during reign of Roman Emperor Tiberius – never to regain prominence

Rev.3:1 x "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) "He who has the seven Spirits of God"
- a) The **number 7** as we have seen represents completion / fullness
 - b) The full power of the Holy Spirit is available at this time
 - c) That wasn't true in O.T.
- 3) "He who has...the seven **stars** says this"
- a) The 7 stars are the 7 angels of the 7 churches
 - b) The term **Angel** means messenger or **Pastor** of Church
Rev.1:20 "As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.
 - c) The pastors of the Churches are supposed to be sensitive to the leadership of the Holy Spirit
 - i) The pastors are to follow God's leadership & the Church is to follow their leadership
 - d) Christ gives this picture by holding the pastors in His hand
 - i) So that they turn when He turns them – moved when HE moved them
- 4) "I know your deeds...you have a name that you are alive but you are dead"
- a) First thing to note is – "dead" does **not** mean lost – as in going to hell
 - i) The next few verses make it clear that He is not talking about salvation but HE is talking about fellowship
 - ii) Dead here means that their work was useless – deeds were of no value
 - b) The Church was like the city
 - i) He used these particular words b/c they fit the city also.
 - ii) The city had a **reputation** for being great – but it was a "has been"
 - iii) The Romans saw the city as an antiquated, barbaric, old city
 - c) Sardis had the movement / motions of being alive for Christ – but it was all a façade. They had quit living for God a long time ago!
 - d) We see what was wrong by looking at next verses **V.2**

V.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.*

- 1) "Wake up"
 - a) The idea is more to watch out – to **become aware**
 - b) They were no longer paying attention to what they did
 - c) They were not paying attention to the leadership of the Holy Spirit
 - i) That is why He mentions here that HE has the 7 Spirits of God
 - ii) The power & leadership were available but they were on autopilot & didn't even stop to see if God was going the same way they were going
 - iii) You can be so intent on going a certain direction that you don't realize you lost your Guide a long time ago
 - d) You can be so busy that you don't notice what has happened to you
 - e) Couples become so busy raising children that they forget to nurture their relationship
 - f) Christians become so busy **doing** that they don't notice that they have lost contact w/ their Savior
 - g) Activity does not equal spirituality

- 2) "Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain"
 - a) Obviously He is speaking to folks who were already saved
 - i) You don't ask an unsaved person to "strengthen anything"
 - ii) They were to go back to the basics & start over again
 - b) They were to stop and take stock of their circumstances & go back to the basics of Scripture
 - c) If they didn't do that – they would lose their grip on what little they had right

- 3) "which were about to die"
 - a) This shows they had a progressive death going on - slowly dying as far as a walk was concerned
 - b) They thought they were doing OK
 - c) None of the Churches seemed to understand where they were in God's eyes
 - d) Even Smyrna didn't realize how well they were doing – they had a good walk & didn't realize how good
 - e) The only way you can determine your condition before God is to look into His Word & ask Him to reveal your condition to you
 - f) WE have another statement that indicates where they were in their walk in the latter part of the verse

- 4) "I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God"
 - a) This gives more details to their poor performance
 - b) Thru the ages God has laid out a path for His Church to follow

- c) The path is customized to fit each Church
 - i) It is not the same path for every Church in every time frame
- d) Sardis was busy doing things
 - i) But they didn't stop & check w/ God to be sure it was what HE wanted them to do
 - ii) This is why He mentions the 7 Spirits & holding the pastors in His hand
 - iii) God hadn't led them the wrong way – they hadn't even ask His opinion
 - iv) Sometimes the answer is so obvious that we don't even ask God what we should do
 - v) That is a huge mistake that will almost always take you down the wrong road.
 - vi) I have told the staff many times that this is so obvious & clear that we better stop & pray or we will do the wrong thing
- e) The Pastor & elders of Sardis apparently weren't looking to Him for guidance either
- f) They not only didn't know what they were to do – they didn't know what a completed job looked like
 - i) If you don't know your assignment you won't know when it is accomplished

V.2“I have not found your deeds completed...”

- g) “completed” is in perfect tense – that means they weren't accomplished in such a way as to have long lasting results
- h) The same principle applies to us as individuals
- i) God makes each of us special, uniquely adapted for a certain assignment
- j) He has a plan laid out just for you
- k) Sadly, most believers haven't even ask God to show His plans to them
- l) **Ephesians 2:10** has little meaning to most believers

Eph.2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **for good works**, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.
- m) You can see from **Eph.2:10** that the good works God has created you to perform actually help make you what God wants you to be.
 - i) In other words, it isn't that God can't get things done w/out you – it is that you can't be what He wants you to be until you work at doing those works.
 - ii) The works make help make you & cultivate you
 - iii) God doesn't need us to do anything – just to accomplish it
 - iv) We have the privilege to do for Him so as to fulfill our needs
 - v) We get to go on the ride of a lifetime by being obedient to Him

n) Sardis' deeds were incomplete b/c they were incomplete

V.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.

- 1) "So remember what you have received and heard"
 - a) They, like the Ephesians were to remember better days & ways
 - b) "received" is in the **perfect tense**
 - i) It was a completed action having permanent results
 - ii) What had they received that had lasting impact? – **The Word of God**
 - 2) "and keep it"
 - a) Hang on to the Word of God for dear life
 - b) You cannot become spiritual or stay spiritual by being nice & helping the poor, doing good deeds – the world can & does in some cases do those things
 - i) You can't even grow spiritually by leading others to Christ – as important as that is!
 - ii) It takes Scripture to grow

Heb.5:11 Concerning him we have much to say, and *it is hard to explain*, since you have become dull of hearing.
12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food.
13 For everyone who partakes *only* of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant.
14 But solid food is for the mature, who **because of practice** have their senses trained to discern good and evil.
- 3) "and repent"
- a) Turn from the sin of leaving the Word of God out of their lives
- 4) "if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief"
 - a) Subjunctive mood, 3rd class condition – maybe they will wake up & maybe they won't
 - b) Cyrus' army must have scaled the wall at night b/c they would have been detected in the light of day
 - i) While the city slept & guards guarded the south entry – the enemy slipped in
 - ii) So He tells them to quit sleeping or HE would come in the night
- 5) "you will not know at what hour I will come to you"
 - a) There is a double negative used here to emphasize fact that they wouldn't know when He was coming

- b) An immature believer is never, ever ready for a face to face meeting w/ the Lord
- c) They always want more time to prepare – to clean house so to speak

V.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.

- 1) "But you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments"
 - a) In any age there are always those who walk w/ God
 - i) Even in Sardis some were waiting for Christ, living for Him
 - b) No one has a legitimate excuse for being unprepared / immature
 - c) No one will ever be able to say to God – I'm this way b/c you didn't make provisions for me to grow
 - d) You as a believer have the Holy Spirit

Jn.14:26 "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

Jn.16:14 "He^(Holy Spirit) will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose *it* to you.

1 Jn.2:20 But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know.

- 2) "they will walk with Me in white"
 - a) This is the fulfillment of Christ prayer when still w/ His disciples

Jn.17:24 "Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

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.

- 1) "He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments"
 - a) Eternal clothing speaks of the character of the individual wearing it

Rev.19:7 "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.
- 2) "I will not erase his name from the book of life"
 - a) This is a hard verse to understand –
 - b) We know what it doesn't say

- c) Never define a clear cut passage w/ a vague passage
- d) Always define the vague w/ the clear to understand
- e) We know you can't lose your salvation b/c over & over we see that
- f) **John 3:16** is an easy & quick way to see that truth
Jn.3:16 "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

- g) I believe this is closely tied to the time frame in which it was given
 - i) The time Sardis represents is the reformation period
 - (1) In other words – the time when the truth was calling people out of the Roman Catholic Church
 - ii) The Roman Catholic Church said they had the keys to death & hades
 - iii) They said they could grant eternal life to whomever they chose
 - iv) People paid for their loved ones taken out of purgatory & taken to heaven
 - v) I believe God is making a distinction between what the church of Rome said & what He says is true
 - vi) I will never, never (double negative in Greek) erase your name from the Book of Life

- 3) "I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels"
 - a) There is a day of accountability for believers that we can't quite wrap our minds around.
2 Tim.2:12 If we endure, we will also reign with Him; If we deny Him, He also will deny us;
 13 If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.

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