

Int'l Training for Elders and Responsible Ones

(Fall 2016)

Returning to the Orthodoxy of the Church

Message Six

The Church in Sardis

Scripture Reading: Rev. 3:1-6

- Rev 3:1 And to the messenger of the church in Sardis write: These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: I know your works, that you have a name that you are living, and yet you are dead.
- Rev 3:2 Become watchful and establish the things which remain, which were about to die; for I have found none of your works completed before My God.
- Rev 3:3 Remember therefore how you have received and heard, and keep it and repent. If therefore you will not watch, I will come as a thief, and you shall by no means know at what hour I will come upon you.
- Rev 3:4 But you have a few names in Sardis who have not defiled their garments, and they will walk with Me in white because they are worthy.
- Rev 3:5 He who overcomes will be clothed thus, in white garments, and I shall by no means erase his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.
- Rev 3:6 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

I. As a sign, the church in Sardis prefigures the Protestant church, from the time of the Reformation to the second coming of Christ—Rev. 3:1:

- Rev 3:1 And to the messenger of the church in Sardis write: These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: I know your works, that you have a name that you are living, and yet you are dead.
- A. When the church, in her continuous fall, came to the stage of Jezebel, God could no longer tolerate it (2:18, 20); the church in Sardis is God's reaction to Thyatira.
- Rev 2:18 And to the messenger of the church in Thyatira write: These things says the Son of God, He who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like shining bronze:
- Rev 2:20 But I have something against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, she who calls herself a prophetess and teaches and leads My slaves astray to commit fornication and to eat idol sacrifices.
- B. Sardis emerges because the Lord has seen the condition of Thyatira; in Greek Sardis means "the remains," "the remainder," or "the restoration."

II. "I know your works, that you have a name that you are living, and yet you are dead"—3:1:

- Rev 3:1 And to the messenger of the church in Sardis write: These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: I know your works, that you have a name that you are living, and yet you are dead.
- A. Many have considered the reformed Protestant church to be living, but the Lord says that she is dead; she has lost the vitality of life and is living in name only.

- B. The frequent revivals in the history of the Protestant denominations are a proof that they are dead.
- C. We surely do not want to be in the condition of the church in Sardis; we want to be living and active in gospel preaching, in nourishing the new ones, in perfecting the saints, and in prophesying to build up the Body of Christ—John 15:16; Matt. 24:45; Eph. 4:12; 1 Cor. 14:1, 3-5, 12.

John 15:16 You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and I set you that you should go forth and bear fruit and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name, He may give you.

Matt 24:45 Who then is the faithful and prudent slave, whom the master has set over his household to give them food at the proper time?

Eph 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ,

1 Cor 14:1 Pursue love, and desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.

1 Cor 14:3 But he who prophesies speaks building up and encouragement and consolation to men.

1 Cor 14:4 He who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but he who prophesies builds up the church.

1 Cor 14:5 I desire that you all speak in tongues, but especially that you would prophesy; and greater is he who prophesies than he who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, that the church may receive building up.

1 Cor 14:12 So also you, since you are zealous of spirits, seek that you may excel for the building up of the church.

III. “These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars”— Rev. 3:1:

- Rev 3:1 And to the messenger of the church in Sardis write: These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: I know your works, that you have a name that you are living, and yet you are dead.
- A. The seven Spirits enable the church to be intensely living, and the seven stars enable her to be intensely shining—1:4, 16a, 20.

Rev 1:4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is coming, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne,

Rev 1:16a And He had in His right hand seven stars; ...

Rev 1:20 The mystery of the seven stars which you saw upon My right hand and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the messengers of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.
 - B. The dead, reformed church needs the sevenfold intensified Spirit of God and the shining leaders—3:1.

Rev 3:1 And to the messenger of the church in Sardis write: These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: I know your works, that you have a name that you are living, and yet you are dead.
 - C. The sevenfold intensified Spirit can never be replaced by the dead letters of knowledge—2 Cor. 3:6.

2 Cor 3:6 Who has also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant, ministers not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.
 - D. The seven Spirits correspond to the seven stars—Rev. 3:1:

Rev 3:1 And to the messenger of the church in Sardis write: These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: I know your works, that you have a name that you are living, and yet you are dead.

1. A star is a messenger of a church, a leading one in a local church; such a messenger should be one with the seven Spirits of God.
2. The stars are those who shine in the darkness and turn people from the wrong way to the right way—Dan. 12:3.

Dan 12:3 And those who have insight will shine like the shining of the heavenly expanse, and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars, forever and ever.

3. Revelation 1:20 and 3:1 show that the stars are linked not only to the Spirit but also to the churches; if we would have the living star or the living stars, we need the Spirit and the church.

Rev 1:20 The mystery of the seven stars which you saw upon My right hand and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the messengers of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

Rev 3:1 And to the messenger of the church in Sardis write: These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: I know your works, that you have a name that you are living, and yet you are dead.

IV. “I have found none of your works completed before My God”—v. 2:

Rev 3:2 Become watchful and establish the things which remain, which were about to die; for I have found none of your works completed before My God.

- A. In the eyes of God there is nothing completed in the so-called reformed churches; everything has a beginning without an end.
- B. Nothing begun in the Reformation has ever been completed by the Protestant churches; therefore, the church in Philadelphia (vv. 7-13), signifying the church in recovery, is needed for the completion.

Rev 3:7 And to the messenger of the church in Philadelphia write: These things says the Holy One, the true One, the One who has the key of David, the One who opens and no one will shut, and shuts and no one opens:

Rev 3:8 I know your works; behold, I have put before you an opened door which no one can shut, because you have a little power and have kept My word and have not denied My name.

Rev 3:9 Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, those who call themselves Jews and are not, but lie—behold, I will cause them to come and fall prostrate before your feet and to know that I have loved you.

Rev 3:10 Because you have kept the word of My endurance, I also will keep you out of the hour of trial, which is about to come on the whole inhabited earth, to try them who dwell on the earth.

Rev 3:11 I come quickly; hold fast what you have that no one take your crown.

Rev 3:12 He who overcomes, him I will make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall by no means go out anymore, and I will write upon him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which descends out of heaven from My God, and My new name.

Rev 3:13 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

- C. The Reformation did not bring the church back to the beginning; it only caused the world church to become the state churches—cf. Matt. 16:18; 18:17; 1 Cor. 1:2; Eph. 1:22-23; Rev.

1:11.

Matt 16:18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

Matt 18:17 And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to hear the church also, let him be to you just like the Gentile and the tax collector.

1 Cor 1:2 To the church of God which is in Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, the called saints, with all those who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, who is theirs and ours:

Eph 1:22 And He subjected all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church,

Eph 1:23 Which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all.

Rev 1:11 Saying, What you see write in a scroll and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamos and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.

D. The Lord is a Lord of completion; therefore, He requires completion—Phil. 1:6.

Phil 1:6 Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun in you a good work will complete it until the day of Christ Jesus;

V. “If therefore you will not watch, I will come as a thief, and you shall by no means know at what hour I will come upon you”—Rev. 3:3:

Rev 3:3 Remember therefore how you have received and heard, and keep it and repent. If therefore you will not watch, I will come as a thief, and you shall by no means know at what hour I will come upon you.

A. This verse indicates that Christ is the One who will come as a thief to steal away His treasures, His precious seekers.

B. Since many believers are spiritually dead, they will be unaware of the Lord’s coming as a thief in His secret appearing to His seekers.

C. Only those who are matured in life and transformed in their soul will be precious enough for the Lord to steal—v. 3.

Rev 3:3 Remember therefore how you have received and heard, and keep it and repent. If therefore you will not watch, I will come as a thief, and you shall by no means know at what hour I will come upon you.

D. We must be thoroughly prepared for the time of the Lord’s secret coming; therefore, we must be ready and watchful—Luke 21:36; Matt. 24:42-44.

Luke 21:36 But be watchful at every time, beseeching that you would prevail to escape all these things which are about to happen and stand before the Son of Man.

Matt 24:42 Watch therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord comes.

Matt 24:43 But know this, that if the householder had known in which watch the thief was coming, he would have watched and would not have allowed his house to be broken into.

Matt 24:44 For this reason you also be ready, because at an hour when you do not expect it, the Son of Man is coming.

VI. “You have a few names in Sardis who have not defiled their garments, and they will walk with Me in white because they are worthy”—Rev. 3:4:

Rev 3:4 But you have a few names in Sardis who have not defiled their garments, and they will walk with Me in white because they are worthy.

A. Garments in the Bible signify what we are in our walk and living—v. 4.

Rev 3:4 But you have a few names in Sardis who have not defiled their garments, and they will walk with Me in white because they are worthy.

B. To defile one's garments means particularly to stain them with deadness; the defiled garments indicate the presence of death or the absence of life:

1. Death is more defiling before God than sin—Lev. 11:24-25; Num. 6:6-7, 9.

Lev 11:24 And by these you shall become unclean; whoever touches their carcass shall be unclean until the evening,

Lev 11:25 And whoever carries any part of their carcass shall wash his clothes and be unclean until the evening.

Num 6:6 All the days that he separates himself to Jehovah he shall not come near a dead person.

Num 6:7 He shall not make himself unclean for his father or for his mother, for his brother or for his sister, when they die, because his separation to God is upon his head.

Num 6:9 And if anyone dies very suddenly beside him so that he defiles the head of his separation, then he shall shave his head on the day he becomes clean; on the seventh day shall he shave it.

2. In Revelation 3:4 defilement denotes anything of the death nature.

Rev 3:4 But you have a few names in Sardis who have not defiled their garments, and they will walk with Me in white because they are worthy.

3. The defilement in Sardis was not the defilement of sin but the defilement of death.

C. Those who have not defiled their garments will walk with the Lord in white—v. 4:

Rev 3:4 But you have a few names in Sardis who have not defiled their garments, and they will walk with Me in white because they are worthy.

1. White signifies not only purity but also approvedness—7:9.

Rev 7:9 After these things I saw, and behold, there was a great multitude which no one could number, out of every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes and palm branches in their hands.

2. White garments in Revelation 3:4 signify the walk and living that are unspotted by death and that will be approved by the Lord; this is a qualification for walking with the Lord, especially in the coming kingdom.

Rev 3:4 But you have a few names in Sardis who have not defiled their garments, and they will walk with Me in white because they are worthy.

3. To walk in white garments is to have a living that is unspotted by death and approved in life by the Lord.

VII. “He who overcomes will be clothed thus, in white garments”—v. 5a:

Rev 3:5a He who overcomes will be clothed thus, in white garments, ...

A. To overcome here is to overcome the deadness of the Protestant churches, that is, to overcome dead Protestantism.

B. Christ is the white garments to clothe the overcomers:

1. White garments refers to livingness; to be living is to wear the white garments.

2. If we are spiritually dead, we are dirty; such a dead person is the dirtiest one; also if we are

dead, we are naked—16:15.

Rev 16:15 (Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he who watches and keeps his garments that he may not walk naked and they see his shame.)

3. We need the living garment to cover us; this living garment is Christ Himself wrought into us by the life-giving Spirit; the only way to have this garment is to turn to the spirit and live in the mingled spirit—Gal. 4:19; Eph. 3:16; 1 Cor. 6:17; Rom. 8:4.

Gal 4:19 My children, with whom I travail again in birth until Christ is formed in you,

Eph 3:16 That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into the inner man,

1 Cor 6:17 But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit.

Rom 8:4 That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the spirit.

4. Being clothed in white garments, as promised in Revelation 3:5, will be a prize to the overcomers in the millennial kingdom; what they have been walking in during this age will be a prize to them in the coming age.

Rev 3:5 He who overcomes will be clothed thus, in white garments, and I shall by no means erase his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.

- C. Every Christian needs two garments—Luke 15:22; Matt. 22:12:

Luke 15:22 But the father said to his slaves, Bring out quickly the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet.

Matt 22:12 And he said to him, Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment? And he was speechless.

1. The first garment is the garment of salvation, signifying Christ as our righteousness objectively:

- a. In Luke 15:22, when the prodigal son returned home, the first thing that the father did was to have the best robe placed upon him.

Luke 15:22 But the father said to his slaves, Bring out quickly the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet.

- b. Wearing the best robe, he was justified and approved; this means that he was justified in Christ and that Christ became his justifying covering.

- c. He was covered with Christ as his righteousness; thus, the garment of justification is for salvation.

2. In addition to the garment of justification, we need another garment to make us approved and well pleasing to the Lord—Matt. 22:12; Rev. 3:5a:

Matt 22:12 And he said to him, Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment? And he was speechless.

Rev 3:5a He who overcomes will be clothed thus, in white garments, ...

- a. This is the garment of approvedness for our acceptance, signifying the Christ whom we live out as our subjective righteousness—Phil. 1:21; 3:9:

Phil 1:21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Phil 3:9 And be found in Him, not having my own righteousness which is out of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is out of God and based on faith,

1) The “fine linen, bright and clean” in Revelation 19:8 denotes this second garment.

Rev 19:8 And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints.

2) According to typology, the queen in Psalm 45 has two garments: one for salvation and the other for her to be with the King in His reign (vv. 8, 13-14).

Psa 45:8 All Your garments smell of myrrh and aloes, of cassia; / From palaces of ivory, harpstrings have made You glad.

Psa 45:13 The king's daughter is all glorious within the royal abode; / Her garment is a woven work inwrought with gold.

Psa 45:14 She will be led to the King in embroidered clothing; / The virgins behind her, her companions, / Will be brought to You.

b. We have been saved and justified and have the first garment—Christ as our objective righteousness—for our salvation; now we need to go on to experience Christ as our subjective righteousness so that we may have the second garment—Phil. 3:9.

Phil 3:9 And be found in Him, not having my own righteousness which is out of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is out of God and based on faith,

c. Christ as our objective righteousness has been put upon us, whereas Christ as our subjective righteousness comes out of us.

d. The white garments in Revelation 3:5 refer to the second garment, which is needed for us to receive the reward and enter into the kingdom to walk with the Lord, that is, to reign with Him—2 Tim. 2:11-12.

Rev 3:5 He who overcomes will be clothed thus, in white garments, and I shall by no means erase his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.

2 Tim 2:11 Faithful is the word: For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him;

2 Tim 2:12 If we endure, we will also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He also will deny us;

D. We all should overcome the dead situation in religion, conquer all kinds of death, and wear the white garments—Rev. 3:4-5a.

Rev 3:4 But you have a few names in Sardis who have not defiled their garments, and they will walk with Me in white because they are worthy.

Rev 3:5a He who overcomes will be clothed thus, in white garments, ...