

# THE 7 CHURCHES OF REVELATION - THE DEAD CHURCH, SARDIS.

*Sister Shelbia opened with prayer:*

*Our Father God we are so thankful to you that we could gather here today. We know you have every person here that you wanted here and we pray for those that aren't here. Especially, Mildred, whose sick; Carol whose traveling. Lord hear all these requests – Loretta, We bring her to you. She loves you and is going thru deep problems Lord. We need your healing touch and let her and Dink know you are with them. Help them meet every need. Dottie's friend who doesn't want to live; the pastors wife who has this loss; Cathy, Dawns niece who has special needs. We know your touch is what they need and desire. We want your will to be done in each case. I know I forgot someone, but you didn't. We ask thy will be done. I'm asking that David Jeremiah will minister to us. We all need what he has today. We are hungry. We want to serve and honor you. We want something we can take home with us all week. We want to be vibrant and awake for you. Make us alive and well and rejuvenated. We're asking that your spirit is alive in us. Blessings on Sharon as she opens her home and on Sheri as she records this session. Thank you for bringing this group together. We truly want to learn and grow; and to honor you. In Jesus name, Amen.*

*Jeremiah 8: A very good read!*

## **Jeremiah 8**

**1**At that time, saith the LORD, they shall bring out the bones of the kings of Judah, and the bones of his princes, and the bones of the priests, and the bones of the prophets, and the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, out of their graves:

**2** And they shall spread them before the sun, and the moon, and all the host of heaven, whom they have loved, and whom they have served, and after whom they have walked, and whom they have sought, and whom they have worshipped: they shall not be gathered, nor be buried; they shall be for dung upon the face of the earth.

**3** And death shall be chosen rather than life by all the residue of them that remain of this evil family, which remain in all the places whither I have driven them, saith the LORD of hosts.

**4** Moreover thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD; Shall they fall, and not arise? shall he turn away, and not return?

**5** Why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? they hold fast deceit, they refuse to return.

**6** I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle.

**7** Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the LORD.

8 How do ye say, We are wise, and the law of the LORD is with us? Lo, certainly in vain made he it; the pen of the scribes is in vain.

9 The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the LORD; and what wisdom is in them?

10 Therefore will I give their wives unto others, and their fields to them that shall inherit them: for every one from the least even unto the greatest is given to covetousness, from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely.

11 For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace.

12 Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore shall they fall among them that fall: in the time of their visitation they shall be cast down, saith the LORD.

13 I will surely consume them, saith the LORD: there shall be no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree, and the leaf shall fade; and the things that I have given them shall pass away from them.

14 Why do we sit still? assemble yourselves, and let us enter into the defenced cities, and let us be silent there: for the LORD our God hath put us to silence, and given us water of gall to drink, because we have sinned against the LORD.

15 We looked for peace, but no good came; and for a time of health, and behold trouble!

16 The snorting of his horses was heard from Dan: the whole land trembled at the sound of the neighing of his strong ones; for they are come, and have devoured the land, and all that is in it; the city, and those that dwell therein.

17 For, behold, I will send serpents, cockatrices, among you, which will not be charmed, and they shall bite you, saith the LORD.

18 When I would comfort myself against sorrow, my heart is faint in me.

19 Behold the voice of the cry of the daughter of my people because of them that dwell in a far country: Is not the LORD in Zion? is not her king in her? Why have they provoked me to anger with their graven images, and with strange vanities?

20 The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.

21 For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; I am black; astonishment hath taken hold on me.

22 Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?

*Jean shared an item with us: Where is your Treasure?*

*Rev 3:1*

700 years before John wrote this letter, Sardis was one of the greatest cities in the world. Situated in the Valley of River Hermus; and in that valley were the unusual spurs of tumultuous mountain. On one of the spurs, 1500 feet up, stood the original city of SARDIS.

The city itself, was surrounded on 3 sides by huge walls. Walls that were nearly perpendicular and almost unscalable. At the foot of the cliffs flowed the river Octovus. And SARDIS was famed for its strategic location. Because it was built on this elevation that was defended on 3 sides by cliffs, and on the 4th side it was approachable by an

isthmus that was so narrow that a handful of men could defend it against 100's of men that were coming against it, the city of SARDIS was considered to be impregnable. In other words, it was safe. No one could ever do anything to assault the city. It was totally okay.

The greatest of the kings of SARDIS was Croesus; and under his leadership, SARDIS achieved its greatest glory. Under his leadership, also SARDIS plunged to disaster. And the story of how it happened is very instructive to what the Lord is going to say to this church, so let me give you a little bit of history of how this took place.

Although he had been warned against the danger of overconfidence, and the resulting weakening of the nation, Croesus, nevertheless, embarked upon a war with Cyrus, King of Persia.

Croesus had to cross the river; and took the famous council of Delphi, who said, 'if you cross the river, you will destroy a great empire'. In his pride, he thought the great empire that would be destroyed was King Cyrus's Persian Empire. He never once thought the empire that would be destroyed would be his own.

And when Croesus met King Cyrus and the Persian Army on the other side of the Hermas River, he was badly defeated and had to run home with his tail between his legs.

Still the proud king's heart was not troubled. I mean, after all, were they not untouchable in their fortress city?

Cyrus was determined, however, to finish off the warriors of SARDIS; and so he determined that he would siege this city until he could figure out how he could destroy it.

And for 14 days, his army stood outside the fortress of SARDIS; and then the king had an idea. He offered a reward to anyone who could find a way to get into the city of SARDIS. This is a true story - it happened in history.

A few days later, a Persian soldier named Herodes happened to be watching the fortress walls that surrounded the city, and he saw a SARDIS soldier accidentally drop his helmet over the wall. And to his surprise, the soldier climbed down the precipice to retreat the helmet. And now he knew there had to be a crack in the rock thru which an agile man could crawl.

That night he led a party of Persian troops up the rocks, located the crack in the precipice and after safely crawling thru the rocks, found that the city was completely

unguarded. And the SARDIANS were so sure of themselves, they did not even post a watch at night.

It is said that even a child could have defended the city from this kind of attack, but not so much as one observer had been assigned to watch that side that was believed to be totally inaccessible.

Herodes and the soldiers opened the gate to the city and the Persian army took the city without so much as a minor skirmish.

Centuries later, history repeated itself when Antiochus used the same approach to gain entrance into the city and take it captive.

When John wrote his letter to SARDIS, it was a wealthy but degenerate city. Twice, they had lost their city because they were too lazy to watch.

And the fact of history concerning the ancient city of SARDIS is the key to understanding the letter that was written to the church that was located there. In other words, the history of the city is a picture of its spiritual downfall.

#### **THE DESTINATION OF THE LETTER -**

***REV 3:1 And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.***

SARDIS is the fifth of the seven churches. It means escaping ones or those who come out.

In the prophetic view of the churches we are studying, SARDIS represents the period of the reformation. And if you know the reformation you know that during the reformation, there were some who came out of the church and objected to what was going on in the church. Some of those who escaped or came out of the church at that time were Luther and Knox, Wycliffe, and Windley.

Martin Luther nailed his 95 thesis to the door of the church in Vittenberg, Germany, and Luther's voice was heard throughout Europe. He found many who responded and they came out of the church as well.

The church of SARDIS is a picture of the reformation period.

Notice how the Lord designates himself in this letter. *Rev 3:1 And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.*

Now remember, everyone of these churches speaks about the Lord in a different way. In each of the Churches the Lord is described in a particular way that's significant to the situation in the church.

For instance, in each of them the spirit of God is operating. As we shall see later, the letter is making a point about the presence of the Holy Spirit. The death of the church in SARDIS came about because they did not have the Holy Spirit in control of the assembly.

*Notice in Rev 3:1..... These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars;*

What are the 7 stars? One of the easiest things to ever discover in the book of Revelation, cause *Rev 1:20 says, The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.*

Once again, the reason that you die is because your spirit is separated from your body. And the reason the church in SARDIS died is because the Holy Spirit was removed from any kind of influence in the church.

#### THE DENUNCIATION OF THE CHURCH:

Now notice in the first verse the Lord Jesus begins his denunciation of the church. And he says to them..... *I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.*

This letter of unmixed condemnation is a marked change from all the previous letters. For the poor, rich church in SMYRNA, the Lord had nothing but words of praise. For the churches of PEGAMOS, EPHESUS, and THYATIRA he had some words of praise and some words of condemnation. Their letters are a mix of praise and criticism, but the church of SARDIS he has not one good thing to say about this church.

There were a few to whom he commends, but to the church as a whole The Lord Jesus doesn't say anything good. Its the first time this has happened, which is very interesting. Especially in light of the reputation this church enjoyed. What was that reputation? They had a reputation that they were alive. They were vibrant, but the Lord Jesus looked down beneath the veneer of their church and said, You aren't alive...You're dead!

You're dead inside!

It had a good reputation but it is the first church in history that was perhaps filled with what we call nominal Christians. People who said they were Christians but were not.

How many of you know that many of the Denominations in our culture today are Christian in name only? Because the people who are in the church aren't Christians. Their not Christians because they go to the church or they don't go to the church; their not Christians because they've never received Jesus Christ as their savior.

But their in a Christian church; and the church has a reputation of being a denominational church, but its filled with people who don't know Jesus. How can you be a church and not know the Lord of the church?

SARDIS appeared to be alive and it was dead. And the Lord is never impressed with the attractiveness of a well kept Mosolien. Because he knows that inside that Mosolien are the bones of dead men.

The works of the SARDIAN church members were slick grave clothes which provided a thin disguise for the corpse. Jesus saw this same defect in the Pharasee's.

According to this Word, they alms, said prayers, disfigured their faces when they fasted, so men would know how spiritual they were.

He saw thru all of that and recognized all they did what they did to be seen by men. And he condemned their hypocrisy is the scathing words of ***Matthew 23:27-28***

***27 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.***

***28 Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity (lawlessness).***

That's a very good description of what was going on in the church of SARDIS. Outwardly, it was a fine church with a reputation; but inwardly, when you got into the reality of the church itself, it was a church that had no life. The Holy Spirit was not involved in this church. It was full of people that made professions of faith but had no reality of faith at all.

My friend Charles Swindol loves to play around with stuff like this. He wrote these words, "He said, don't go to that church. Its dead!" What exactly does that mean? It means their sanctuary is a morgue with a steeple. Its a congregation of corpses with undertakers for ushers. Embalmers for elders and morticians for ministers. They sing embalmed in Gilead, how amazing the grave and how sweet the ground. You might describe their worship as stiff. At the rapture, they'll be the first churches taken up because the Bible says, the

dead in Christ shall rise first. They drive to church in one long line with their headlights on. Whenever someone joins their church membership, the church office immediately notifies the next of kin. Each week they put an ad in the obituary. The church van is a black hurst; and the church sign is a tombstone. Their motto is, many are cold and a few are frozen. And that's a dead church!

Well its kinda humorous to say that but a church that appears to be something outwardly and inwardly, isn't what its suppose to be isn't funny, is it?

And many times you and I run into things like that. Maybe we have friends that go to churches like that. They started out in these churches years ago when they were fundamental and over the years they've slipped away from the things of God. And they've just become sort of a social organization where there's no spiritual life whatsoever.

### THE DIRECTION TO THE CHURCH:

Now the Lord Jesus directs this church and the direction he gives to the church is in verses **3:2** *Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.*

**3** *Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.*

**4** *Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.*

As you read that paragraph, let me unpack it for you real quick. To this dead church Jesus Christ gives 5 exhortations:

1. Be sensitive to the inroads of sin in the church. **Rev 3:2...** *"Be watchful"*. The Greek word for watchful conveys the idea of someone who is intent upon something. It comes from 2 words which mean, to chase sleep. In other words he's saying to the people in this church, if you want to maintain your vibrancy in the church, you'd better stay awake.

Theres no time to go to sleep in the culture in which we live...in the church.

Ephesians 5:14 says, **14** *Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.*

And Christ is not just saying to the church that it should wake from its death sleep, he is calling upon them to remain awake; and to keep watch as a watchman who is responsible for the safety of a sleeping army.

This is a call to continued alertness and the first step toward renewal in a dying church is honest awareness that something is wrong and a commitment to protect it from further decay. And if you ever run into someone that's in a church; and I have met many friends over the years who said, I know my church is dying. I know it's dead, and I feel like I should stay in there and do my best to try and help; and I can't condemn them for doing that. I don't know what to say to a person like that. Sometimes I've said, well if you can stay and make a difference, that's okay. But if you find the church is making a difference in you, then you'd probably better get out.

But there are many people finding themselves in historic churches where their parents and grandparents went. The church at one time was a lighthouse, with fundamental testimony, and they cared about the lost and about missions, but over time their life has ebbed away until now it's just an outward shell and nothing real is going on on the inside.

So churches die like that - they die spiritually because they allow doctrinal error to slip into the membership. So in the church of SARDIS, what happened was they had no restrictions. Perhaps the first Sunday you walked onto the property you could start teaching and little by little, doctrinal error began to slip into the church until after a while, they had no creed whatsoever. It was whoever and whatever, and the church was dead. Be sensitive to the inroads of sin in the church.

- 1. BE SUPPORTIVE OF THOSE WHO REMAIN TRUE TO CHRIST IN THE CHURCH. *Rev 3:2 says, strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die...". Rev 3:4 says, 'you have a few names even in SARDIS who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.'***

Here we see the way of the few and the way of the many. There is never a day so dark but that God has His stars. His men. For instance, in the andilouvian period, God had righteous Enoch and righteous Noah. In the days of universal idolatry, there was Abraham; and even in Sodom, there was Lot. Christ was literally saying to this church, you have some who have not capitulated to the times. They are the faithful remnant and His instruction to the church is to strengthen those faithful few and encourage them. He goes on to say that those who have not yet soiled their cloths will walk with Jesus, dressed in white.

Jesus is presumably promising here that His followers who have not polluted themselves with the paganism of their culture, will participate in the new Jerusalem and the dwelling of God.



What do you think of the church as this? Be sensitive to the inroads of sin in your church. Be careful....stand at the front door and don't let it in the front door. And #2, be supportive of those who are still in the church.

What usually happens in the church is those who remain true are persecuted because they are standing for the word of God.

How many times I've had people tell me they've had audiences with the pastors of their church and the pastors have told them 'you've got to quit doing this Bible stuff' in your home. You've gotta quit teaching the Bible in this class. That is not who we are any more.

And so theres a tendency not to encourage those any more that read the Bible, but to discourage them and keep them from being who God wants them to be.

Here's the 3rd exhortation:

**2. BE SUBMISSIVE TO THE CONTROL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE CHURCH. *Rev 3:3 Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.***

This instruction takes us back to the designation of the Lord who is the one that 'has the seven spirits of God'. When Christ challenges this church to remember how they received and heard, He is reminding them of the importance of the Holy Spirit. Every believer receives and hears the same way. Thru the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Just as physical death is the result of the separation of the spirit from the body, so spiritual death is the result of the separation of the Holy Spirit from the body of Christ, which is the church. And once again, we need to remember that a church dies when the spirit is no longer allowed to have control in the church.

When the spirit of God becomes an absentee spirit of God.

John Stott, one of the great expositors of our generation said, we administer great projects and we create impressive committees, but we often leave the Holy Spirit out. He has rightly been called the forgotten member of the trinity. Only when the church of Christ is filled with the spirit of Christ can spiritual death be banished and a name for life have any reality behind it.

If you go to a church and the spirit of God is not present, that church is either dead or its in the process of dying.

Let me tell you what I've observed, and I don't know that this is an absolute rule, but if you visit around in churches maybe someday you'll move and you'll have to go to a new place to go to church. This first thing you should watch is this - **HOW DO THESE PEOPLE WORSHIP THE LORD?**

Do they do so in a dead ritualistic way or is there vibrancy and life in the worship? I'm not talking about the style of worship - that is a whole different thing. But when you walk into a church that really knows how to worship, the first thing you realize is that the Holy Spirit is alive and well in this body. Because its the Holy Spirit who causes us to worship the Lord.

What is that ministry of the Holy Spirit? For us to glorify GOD! What is worship? It is GLORIFYING GOD; and when the Holy Spirit is alive in the church you can tell by the worship of the people. That's usually the first sign.

When my son was a student, he use to call home routinely and complain about the churches. And he would say, today I went to a church where they taught the word of God; and the music was terrible. And the next week, he'd call up and say, this week I went to a church that had really great music, but the preaching was awful. Dad, why can't they get it right?

Why can't they get a church where the music is alive and the spirit of God is being expressed? And they teach the word of God. That the combination that God blesses; and when you allow either one of those to be thrown out for reasons nobody will ever be able to explain to me, then the church begins the slow death that we have watched in so many churches in our culture today.

So the word of God says when you're in a situation where it may be that the church is dying, be sensitive to the inroads of sin in the church. Be supportive of those who remain true to the Christ of the church. Be submission to the control of The Holy Spirit in the church.

**3.BE SUBJECT TO THE AUTHORITY OF GODS WORD IN THE CHURCH. Notice verse 3 in chapter 3:... 'hold fast'.** This is a very interesting word of instruction for it is traced thru the Bible and specifically thru the book of Revelation; and when it is used in the book of Revelation, of keeping the word of God.

Now I have a whole lot of references and I had to pare them down cause I don't want to bore you with all of them. Let me give you some of them. You see if you can figure out what it mean to hold fast. The word itself means to keep. Its the same word.

*Rev 1:3 Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.*

*Rev 3:8 I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.*

*Rev 12:17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

*Rev 22:7 Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.*

What does Jesus mean when he says holds fast? He means, keep the Word of God! Follow the word of God and keep it. What does it mean to keep it? It means to OBEY IT! Allow it to be that which governs your life, not only the life of the church, but the life of the people who go to the church.

Let the Word of God be the center of **EVERYTHING THAT GOES ON IN YOUR LIFE!**

If you abandon the Word of God, you will sooner or later be a dead church because the Word of God is the food that we eat as believers, and when you quit eating, pretty soon you'll start dying.

And one of the reasons we have churches today that are languishing is because someone has told them that the word of God is not a relative as it use to be and you can somehow do church by marginalizing the Word of God, and throwing in a little text here and there and giving market research and telling people what they want to hear and send them out all pumped up but with no meat on their bones and pretty soon they become emaciated. Pretty soon they become malnourished; and pretty soon as the Christians die, the church begins to die. Does that sound familiar? Is that not what happens in churches that you and I both know about?

If there ever comes a time at Shadow Mountain when the Word of God is not important, we are on the edge of not being the church God called us to be and before we know it we will begin a slow death.

When Christ speaks to this dying church and instructs the members to hold fast, He is clearing calling them to return to the obedience of the Word of God.

The absence of Bible doctrine will kill a church. Churches tottering on the edge of death should take note of this clear command. The life of a church can be traced to the teaching of the Word of God and the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Do you see how carefully this passage of scripture dissects what goes on in churches when they lose their way? The Holy Spirit is cast out. The Word of God is pushed aside. And all of a sudden, the life of the church is gone.

So, be sensitive to the inroads of sin in the church, be supportive of those who remain true to Christ in the church, be submission to the control of the Holy Spirit in the church, be subject to the authority of God's Word in the church, and then finally,

**4.BE SORRY AND REPENT FOR THE SIN OF THE CHURCH.** Notice again in verse 3, all of these instructions are from one verse. *Rev 3:3... 'repent'*

Here is the same word of instruction that was given to the church of EPHESUS that had abandoned its first love. Here is the same command that was given to the church of PERGAMOS, that had corrupted itself with immorality and idolatry. Gods method of recovery is always the same, 'If you're in the process of dying, the only way you can reverse it is to repent, which means to turn around and go in the other direction.'

To stop where you're going, do a 180 and go back to where you started when you were doing the right thing. Ask God to forgive you for abandoning the Word of God and this is true for our lives as well as for the church. Maybe you started out on fire for the Lord as an individual, and something in you felt sorta dead. You're not alive to Christ and the word of God in the church is not what is once was.

If you look down these things that are on this list, these things that cause churches to die, they are almost always the same things that cause Christians to lose the vibrancy of their faith.

**GO BACK AND PUT THE HOLY SPIRIT IN CONTROL OF YOUR LIFE!** Find some time every day to get the word of God in your heart. Repent of where you've been and where you shouldn't be. And watch how God begins to bring new life into your life! Just as he will do in any church that will follow his pattern.

So we see the destination of this letter and the designation of the Lord; and the denunciation of the church and the correction to the church, and now we see **THE DECLARATION TO THE CHURCH.**

***Chapter 3:5 He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.***

***6 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.***

At the end of the letter, the declaration to the church. To those within the church of SARDIS who are true to Christ, there is a 3-fold promise that is given:

The overcomers mentioned here are the few who have not defiled their garments. The ones in the church who have not gotten caught up in the dying of the church. The ones that the church is suppose to encourage because they still are alive in Christ.

The Lord Jesus says to those and to all of us who follow the same pattern,

### **5.THEY SHALL BE CLOTHED IN WHITE.**

***Rev 3:5...he who overcomes shall be clothed in white.***

In scripture, the clothing of a believer is usually a reference to his service or his character. When the book of Revelation speaks of white robed people, it explains their robes as the righteousness of the saints.

Those in SARDIS who have kept themselves pure are promised that they will walk with Christ in white. The significance of this would have been felt deeply by these Christians. In their Roman culture, this statement by Christ would have recalled to their minds a particular day in Roman observance called the Roman Day of Triumph.

Let me tell you about that day. For it makes all of this very relevant. On this particular day in Roman culture, all work was suspended. All true Roman citizens dawned a white toga. Those who were the civic authorities and those who were the relative of a citizen who was being honored would have a part in this majestic triumphal procession.

Christ was reminding the believers in SARDIS that they would walk one day in triumph with Christ. They would wear white. They would walk in the triumphant procession of the victorious Lord. They shall be clothed in white. Notice that 2. THEY SHALL BE CONTINUED IN THE BOOK. ***Rev 3:5... 'and I will not blot out his name from the book of life.'***

There are many ideas about what this means and some think this says you can lose your salvation. That your name can be blotted out of the book of life.

I remember as a seminary student writing an exegetical paper on this and the problems that seemed to surround its interpretation.

Of the various views that are suggested in many of the commentaries, there is none that seem so plausible as the understanding of this statement in line of its historical context.

In every city of that day, a register was kept of all the citizens of the city. In that register was entered the name of every child born in that city. If one of the citizens conducted himself in a disloyal or treachurous manner, he was publically dishonored by having his name erased from the registry. On the other hand, if a citizen would distinguish himself by some loyal or brave act on behalf of the city, his name would be inscribed in the registry in golden letters.

Our Lords words to the overcomes in SARDIS are emphatic. He will never erase their names from the heavenly register. Literally the text says, I will never by any means blot out his name.

This is not talking about the possibility of a name being blotted out of the book in heaven. It is an absolute statement that it won't happen. He will never, not ever, under any circumstances allow his name to be blotted out; and the Greek text uses a double negative to underscore the truth.

**You will never be blotted out of the book of life!**

That's true for all of us that are Christians but it's specifically true, for those who are overcomers, who walk in white and are living for the Lord.

Its almost like God says, not only will your name be in the register, I'll put your name in the register in golden letters, so that everyone will know that you belong to me.

***LUKE 10:20, Jesus said, 20 Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.***

I hope your name is written in heaven!

That your name is written in the lambs book of life because if its not, you have missed the register that is necessary for you to be admitted to heaven.

The only way to get your name on the register of the book of life is to allow the blood of the lamb of the Lord Jesus Christ to wash away your sin.

When you do that, He puts you in His book; and your name is there indelibly placed and it will never be erased.

## 6. THEY SHALL BE CONFESSED BEFORE THE FATHER. *Rev 3:5... 'and I will confess his name before my Father and before His angels'....*

The Bible says that the one who is not ashamed of Christ during his earthly life, will one day acknowledged by Christ before the Father and before the angels.

And here's how that works out in the culture to which it was written. It is the same figure sustained throughout the whole letter. The faithful in the white toga of the freeborn son should walk in the triumphant procession with the victor. They should be brought into the banquet and clad into the shining a vestal robe their name should be honored in a civic register and finally, they should be confessed before the emperor. In the presence of the emperor and his courtiers, the victorious captain would relay the deeds of his mighty men.

And acknowledge their worth before the Argus court. And just as that happened in the Roman culture, the Bible say as that is what's going to happen someday. That almighty God will confess our name to the tribunal of heaven and say these are my soldiers. These are my sons and daughters. They are dressed in the white righteousness, not only of their own righteous acts, but of the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

When you stay to the true to the word of God; and you demonstrate that you have the real Christian faith, this is what you can look forward to. This is the promise to the overcomers that we get from Jesus.

## 7. THE DEATH OF THE CHURCH.

Now, I'd like to ask you to give me a few moments because I'd like to conduct an autopsy.

I'd like to see if we can determine why the church of SARDIS died, like I was a medical examiner.

This takes a little bit of grace on your part and a little imagination too. We are trying to find out why this church died. When you do an autopsy the first thing you do is you rule out things that are not the cause of death.

**A. WE CAN RULE OUT DEATH FROM AN OUTSIDE ENEMY** - Its impossible to kill a church from the outside. Think back to the history of the church and you would discover this to be true. In the very first days of the church when the church was turning the world upside down, the Jews set themselves to destroy the church thru persecution and instead every time they tried to persecute the church, the church grew. The seat of the martyrs was the growth of the church.

Every time they persecuted the church, the church broke out in greater growth and greater vibrancy there was nothing they could do from the outside. And as we have studied in this series, the Romans' tried to destroy the church thru persecution of its leaders and its people and every time they did it, the church got stronger. You will never kill a church by the outward persecution of that church.

There will come a day in this culture, especially in the future, when to be a Christian, will cost you something. To come to church may put you under some persecution, but I want to tell you I almost look forward to that because if that happens, they'll be more people in this church than are here right now.

People will come to church out of obedience to God because that's what happens when the church is persecuted, so when we are trying to rule out what caused the death in this church, we can rule out death by an outside enemy because there's no such thing as an outside enemy killing a church.

**B. WE CAN RULE OUT DEATH BY SUICIDE.** The church did not die on purpose. There was no definite break with Jesus Christ. The members of the church had not called a meeting to pass a resolution that may have read like this, whereas we have become disenchanted with the Christian life, and whereas we have come to realize that the promises of Jesus Christ were not worthy to be taken literally, be it resolved from this day forward we renounce all allegiance to and faith in Jesus Christ in this church. That never happened. The church is not dying because of suicide.

**C. IT DOES NOT DIE BY ABANDONMENT.** The church did not die because it was abandoned by God or by those who were true to God. We know this because there was a remnant that remained true to the Lord. We just read about it. They did not defile their garments said the Word of God. They were alive, even though they were surrounded by the dead.

You can rule out death from an outside enemy, death by abandonment, and death by suicide.

Here's how the church died: **THE CHURCH DIED THROUGH THE DEATH OF ITS INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS -**

That's how it died! There is no such thing as a church alive without a church filled with living members. People who live for Christ. The church died one by one, little by little, as the vibrancy of Christ disappeared from its individual members. What a sobering thought this is.



A church lives only as its individual members live. I once read about a minister who had a reputation for doing eccentric things. Pastor David Jeremiah does not do eccentric things!

One Sunday morning he told his congregation that he had come to believe their church was dead; and that that evening, he was going to preach the funeral service of the church. They had a huge crowd!

That night when they came back there was a casket at the front of the church and as the people silently gathered for the service, the pastor delivered the message.

And at the close of the service, he said, some of you may not agree with me that this church is dead. That you may be convinced, I'm going to ask that you view the remains. I want you to file by the casket one by one and see who is dead. And in preparation for this, he had a mirror placed in the bottom of the casket and it was obvious what everyone saw when they filed in front of the casket and looked into the casket. Why was the church dead? Because the individuals in the church were dead!

Churches die when individual members no longer care about the things of God and allow their faith to wain and they begin to backslide.

The church died thru the death of individual members and

#### **E. THE CHURCH DIED BECAUSE IT RELIED ON ITS PAST REPUTATION.**

Vince Habler has frequently been quoted as saying spiritual ministry's go thru 4 stages: A man, a movement, a machine, and then a monument.

SARDIS had become a monument. Earlier in her history, the church had won a good reputation. Everyone came to think well of them and they came to think well of themselves. They were sure they had arrived. They were content with themselves. They had built a beautiful church building on the corner of self satisfaction and complacency street and they went quietly into the sleep of death.

Do you see the parallel? The church was taken captive in exactly the same way that the city was taken captive.

How instructive is this letter? Thru a heavy dose of overconfidence. Overconfidence is a familiar road to defeat and many churches have died while the members were congratulating each other on their abundant life.

The church died thru the death of its individual members and because it relied on its past reputation,

## **F. THE CHURCH DIED BECAUSE IT LET SIN CREEP INTO THE MEMBERSHIP!**

In 3:4, the people who had not capitulated to the death of the congregation are described as people who had not soiled their garments. Apparently part of the death of this church was the dirt in this church. Beneath the polished reputation of the church was secret sin. Haroditus, the historian records that over the course of many years, the church in SARDIS had acquired a reputation for lax moral standards and even open sin in the church.

## **G. THE CHURCH DIED BECAUSE IT WAS NOT SENSITIVE TO SIN IN ITS MEMBERSHIP AND BECAUSE ITS WAS NOT SENSITIVE TO ITS OWN SPIRITUAL CONDITION.**

Do you know what the church of SARDIS was like? Just like Sampson. Do you remember Sampson? Sampson who'd lost God without even being aware that he'd lost him. And when danger threatened, he rose up with his old confidence saying I will go out as before, at other times, and shake myself free. But it was not to be this time. The Bible says but he did not know that the Lord had departed from him. This statement concerning Sampson could have been the inscription on the tombstone of the SARDIAN church.

They did not know that the Lord had departed from them. What a tragic story! A church that thought it was alive but was dead!

I don't know if you've ever had the opportunity to go up to Long Beach and tour The Queen Mary. Thru 4 decades and a world war, The Queen Mary served until she was retired. Anchored now as a museum. A floating hotel, if you will, up in Long Beach. During the conversion of this ship to a hotel, her 3 massive smoke stacks were taken off to be scraped down and repainted. But when they took them off and put them on the dock they crumbled. Nothing was left of the 3/4 inch steel plate from which the stacks had been formed. All that remained were the 30 coats of paint that had been applied over the years of the ship. The steel had all rusted away and when they put the smokestacks on the dock, they crumbled because nothing was left. How many of you know that its possible to have good coat of paint and be dead as a door nail? And that was what was true on the ship. That is what was true in SARDIS.

When Jesus Called the pharasee's white washed tombs, what he meant was they had not substance, only an appearance.

We want to see worshipping God with a Fervor. If we will all do that and each of us take that responsibility. If we see any sign of death, we take immediate action to stop it. If we do this, the church will be alive for many years.

*A truly vital church will be under attack. If the world finds no fault with your church, its a dead church. We will expect criticism. They don't do music right, they don't worship right, etc.*

*We will now its an alive church...they won't say anything about a dead church.*

*Next week is the Church of Philadelphia.*

*Did you notice that He brought this up?  
Remember what it was like in the beginning  
repent - of your sin.  
repeat....the former things.*

### ***BEING AWAKE!***

*The woke movement is apparently going strong today. Being woke, you have Neanderthal thinking.*

*Woke is a past tense. So we don't want anything to do with woke. We want to be alive and awake. **Awake is PRESENT.***

*I mentioned last week about two mistakes are often made concerning satan:*

- 1. People assume he doesn't really exist*
- 2. Imagine him to be god or like god.*

*If you went out and asked John Doe what the opposite of God is, what would you hear? You'd probably hear satan, but God has no opposite. God is the ultimate, supreme, only one, Lord of Lords, the creator.*

*God actually created Lucifer.*

*Shelbia doesn't have any problem thinking satan is going to be god like, but we give satan too much credit or authority sometimes. He comes as an angel of light, which messes people up. You don't realize he's evil.*

*Biggest thing Pauline finds, is that satan is a defeated enemy. The battle is already won.*

*We have dominion back. When Eve sinned, satan got dominion over earth.  
Satan try's to get you to fear. Fear is **FALSE EVIDENCE THAT APPEARS REAL.***

*When Christ enters our life, we have authority over our life.*

*There are more and more places in the Bible where GOD fought the battles of the Israelites. Gideon, Jehoshaphat, Joshua are examples of his fighting for the Israelites.*

***ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS TO HANG ONTO GOD AND DO NOT DOUBT OR FEAR.***

*Even when our circumstances are awe full, GOD is going to do something.*

*Each of us today are here, doing what we should be doing. In order not to be deceived, you have to know the word of God.*

*Satan creeps in when and where you least expect it. You don't realize satan is going it. HE'S THE GREAT DECEIVER.. he will bring your past up until you tell him, NO - ITS UNDER THE BLOOD OF JESUS!*

*Its a sudden thing, your circumstances like in Samaria that said 'we'll eat your baby today, and we'll eat mine tomorrow'.*

*God had the enemy destroy themselves and the Israelites had lots of eat.*

*Its important to acknowledge that God did something for you! Amanda was in a near accident, but got stopped and realized that God kept her safe. She praised God.*

*When people hear from others the things God has done for them, they are encouraged.*

*We've got to remember that we are never alone. He's with us, because he said he would always be with us!*

*We have to keep our antenna up BIG TIME, because if satan can't get in one way, he'll get in another way.*

*-dungeons and dragons.*

*-coming around with you tube and social media to give subliminal messages to our children.*

*-super bowl half time was a wild, pagan dance presentation. It was pure satan worship, wound up in white turbans. The next day, the word satan appeared in the fire background. One of the men said there are at least 9 cities preparing for satanic ceremonies to usher in the reset.*

*-if you're a white child, you are born racist. This is being taught in schools to our children. The school board okayed it, but parents are going after the school board. That is their best recourse - and keep those from getting reelected again.*

***GOD CAN DO ANYTHING! We must remember this!***

*We live in a world that has satan in control. When he took over, he tried to make things difficult for us.*

*If we give things to God, we are witnessing to other people. When you give a situation to God, he will take the curse and make a blessing out of it.  
Christ is our healer!*

We have to choose every day, if we are going to live God or not. We'd better be progressing toward God and give him the honor for everything. We've all been thru severe things.

**TURNING POINTS** for Junes is about the troublemaker. Its about the devil.

Page 22 says whats ahead for Gods people:

-don't think of satans ultimate defeat as a future event. He was defeated by the death and resurrection of Christ.

*-Hebrew 2:14 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;*

*-satans been defeated but he's not yet been banished. He's dangerous. The capitated head of a poisonous snack is still dangerous.*

*-If you don't pray, this is one of the demons way of attacking a believer.*

*-satan is very, very subtle.*

*Sharon doesn't want to listen to the news a lot, but wants to know whats going on. She said, I don't understand. It there no one that can stop these people. My instant answer is that God can!*

**WE'VE GOT TO BE IN PRAYER ABOUT THINGS.**

*There is a time limit on the dominion of this world.*

*When that time is up, the church has to get the power in our heads that we are powerful beings. When we pray, we bring heaven down to earth.*

*We are going to refer to this book a little more. Why is wrath and glory an appropriate name for this book about revelation? Because when Jesus returns, he will first pour out the wrath of God before he manifests his glory as King of Kings.*

*What is the Biblical basis of the picture on the cover? Jesus comes back on a white horse and defeat the huge army at the valley of Armageddon. Israel has been preparing for the final battle for many years.*

*What has been your feeling about the book of revelation and why? We never knew it could be so interesting. When you read the paper and see things happening, its remarkable.*

*Jesus died on Passover;  
The Holy Spirit came on Pentecost;  
so we will see the beginning of the birth pains.*

*The book of Revelation is to encourage and inform us. We need to be encouraged and look up; have our faith strengthened.*

*II Timothy 3  
II Thessalonians*

*There is a movement to get rid of Christians. The left know there is power with Christians.*

*Paulines grandson just got married; and he chose a minister who had been his teacher. He didn't get a job because he was a Christian.*

*Christians are the only thing keeping the great reset from happening.*

*We are suppose to pray, encourage each other, go out in the world and share Jesus. We are suppose to be witnesses for Christ. We are to jump for joy when we are persecuted.*

*We want to go thru life rejoicing; and be the strong body we should be for Christ. He will tell us what we should do.*