

(P. outline) Oct, 3, 71 P.M. WXKI -

THE CHURCH AT SARDIS

Rev. 3:1-6

The city of Sardis was a noble place which had excellent mountains and was the capitol city, and perhaps had one of the richest men of ancient times. His name was Croesus. He was the last of the Lydian kings when Cyrus conquered him near the middle of the sixth century B. C. he took 600 million dollars worth of treasures. The city later was destroyed by earthquake. There were manufacturing plants which were prosperous. The art of dying wool was discovered there. They had a great commercial market and this was also the sight of this church, which our Lord places some charges against it before he praises it - or gives it any sort of approval. It had a palace of magnificance and was the center of wise men and rich men. They tell us that a number of the greatest names in history, important men, was registered there. But after it was reduced to desolation - there was nothing left but a few huts, and a few wild trees. And it seems as went the city - so it was with the church.

We do not know who was the founder of this church. Some feel that maybe St. John was the man that planted Christianity there. It was a church that was distinguished because of the character of the place and the wealth of the people. And because it warranted a place as a model for the church throughout history - it found a place here in the New Testament.

As on previous studies in the book of Revelation - I wish now to give you the outline that we will follow.

1. A Slumbering Church - V. 1.
2. A Startling Alarm - V. 2 and 3.

By these three statements we can organize our thoughts and I believe it will be profitable for us.

I. A Slumbering Church - V. 1

In this verse we find a startling discovery being made, by the one who presents himself to the angel - or to the pastor.

First we might note the one that presents himself as the one who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. Now this is a very important and delightful truth here that comes from meditation. Whatever need the church may be in - here is everything in Christ to meet the want.

He has the seven spirits of God. This means that there is in him an ample Holy Spirit, for the illumination, the quickening, the sanctification, and the abundant help of all of his people.

If they are in darkness - he has the fullness of the spirit to enlighten them. If their life is feeble, their faith weak, then he has the power and the grace to revive them. Whatever may be the infirmity. He has the seven spirits of God.

Now many have debated whether the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father as we confess from the Father and the Son - but Christ's own words as he spoke them to us settled that question. The seven spirits of God are the manifold fullness of the Holy Ghost. And as the Son claims to have these, and has them to impart - he must be God. And the Holy Ghost issues from him the same as from the Father. Certainly we have in him all power and grace to help.

The office of the Holy Spirit - the paraclete as he is called, is an instructor, a witness, a monitor, a helper, a guide, a comforter. He is all six of these things. The giving of the Holy Spirit is an endowment of power, from on high. With his presence he quickens, he energizes, he establishes, he equips, and he leads - and he prospers in all sacred experiences. In fact there is nothing that we more need, or that the church more needs, to keep it alive, in faith and in good works. But for all these offices Jesus had and sent the Holy Ghost. And he gives him to all them that ask him. The consolation, spirituality, and joy.

Now this is at least a recognition of the ministry which belongs to Christ. And he speaks to his ministers in the church, who are controlled by him.

The seven stars of the masters of the seven churches. Now this means that he instituted the ministry. He calls men into it. To own them and their ministry, by which he depends - he dispenses life and salvation. They are his ambassadors. By him they speak. A minister has no right to go beyond his word or to do in his name what he has not commanded. They are his and he owns them and he provides them to the church. And they are to discharge the duties of their high office. No minister is in any respect independent of Christ. And no church is independent of the ministry Christ has constituted for its service.

If a church has a good and faithful minister, Christ has sent him and made him what he is. And will never cease to qualify and send faithful ministers into his churches. If people will look to him for ~~them~~ and profit, as they should, by the ones he sends.

This to me is a great comfort and truth that Jesus has these stars - he equips them, he sends them to serve his flock, and he holds them and controls

Jesus also charges his people to pray that the Lord of the harvest will send forth labors into his harvest. They are also worth praying for. For how shall men hear without a preacher - and how shall they preach accept they be sent. A good and faithful minister is indeed a star in Christ's right hand. He is a bearer of light - a light giver - because he possesses the Holy Spirit.

So he addresses the angel and speaks to the pastor.

And he declares here is a slumbering church. I know what people are saying. That you are alive - but he says, you are dead. You are asleep. You have a lifeless profession. And this was a startling discovery, to find that the church was slumbering. Nothing was hid from him - he moved not that anybody should tell him. His eyes searches the hearts of all his people. He knows their works. He understands everyone.

He saw in this church in Sardis that it had a name and a pretty good reputation. And it was credited with a great deal of activity and life. Perhaps there was much wealth in this church, the people were perhaps very liberal with their contributions. The general causes at any rate, had a name of a church of being alive.

One thing you will note, he does not find fault with them for giving place to false teachers. Or even harboring unworthy members.

Or falling for the doctrine of Jezebel. They were orderly, peaceful, respectful, and had a reputation in their outward appearance. But things may not always be what they seem. This church had a name for life - but it was actually dying. While it was largely dead as to truth, to spirituality, there was the formality - the inward stagnation - perhaps there was world

contamination and spiritual decay.

The people here were working - they had activities. But death was creeping in over their souls and a process of dying had set him - and Jesus had come at the right time, to tell them and try to prevent the coming of dry bones and Ezekiel's vision.

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JUST FOR FUN

A grizzled hillbilly spelled out with some difficulty the inscription on a tombstone next to his family plot: "Not dead but sleeping."
He chuckled and remarked to his wife, "Hildy, here's a fella who ain't foolin' nobody but hisself!"

--Bennett Cerf

Now we should b
description as here a

some of us who have a reputation for living, for devotion, for godliness - but there is something absent from the soul. There is a thing as impressing others with the idea that we are alright and the hand of death may be upon our whole spirit.

So I believe that this fatal formalism - their services went on. The body perhaps was breathing - but the church was fast asleep. Dr. Lee once said of a church in Charleston, S. C. that it resembled a cemetery. And he said those people never did forgive him for saying that.

Maybe the world may think well of your church. It has a name of being alive. But Christ found not the kind of perfect work there. And so they are declared a slumbering church.

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Now it is hard to conceive of a more unfortunate condition for a church than to have a name to live while virtually dead. It is not so bad to be dead and know it but as to go on as a hypocrite and make a show. To be dead in this way is disgusting. And often the case with churches and with people who profess to be Christians.

Now we should be not be too confident in turning away from the description as here applied, and not apply it to ourselves. There may be some of us who have a reputation for living, for devotion, for godliness - but there is something absent from the soul. There is a thing as impressing others with the idea that we are alright and the hand of death may be upon our whole spirit.

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II. A Startling Alarm - V. 2 and 3.

Since he found the church asleep, Jesus turned the alarm on and demanded that they wake up from this sad life. And so he said, be watchful. (Wake up) is really what he said. The weakness and the unworthiness in the flock - wherein they are not right. He is anxious to bring them and to help them become right. Where there is a faulty condition - he wants to (give them opportunity) and means of recovery before things have gone beyond remedy.

God (always does this). He is reluctant to give up even rebellious people. Even Israel, you remember, almost in tears - Jesus said, Oh Jerusalem - thou that killest the prophets and stones them sent unto thee - how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings. But ye would not. He is moved towards those of his own flock - whom he found out of the way. And he gives a tender appeal. And the alarm here is to wake up this church.

✓ First of all, he wants them to (get their eyes open). Become watchful, wakeful, stir themselves.

Paul to the Ephesians once said - awake thou that sleepest and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

It appears that these people have rocked themselves to sleep in their faith. Self-satisfying. It was sleep that meant death if they were not aroused from it. They were now to stir themselves - to awakeness - more vigor - spiritual earnest. They were not out of dangers - but they were not alive to it. And they were drowsie concerning their religious duties. They were

gradually sinking into a state of death.

They were to trim their lamps of their profession - and put themselves as a lookout. And this was the alarm that Jesus sounded here. Because he knew their work. And so a group revival was called for.

Like the (rich fool) in Matthew 24:48-51. He was challenged to wake up.

✓ Second, they were to (strengthen what was about to fold up.) In other words, what you have received and the things that remain - are ready to die. He says it is time to strengthen them. Strengthen what you have here. Their profession was still continuing - some work was still being done. Everything needed a tonic and needed revival. And this was what they were now to give themselves to.

When people become lax and complaining with reference to the church - and religious duties become erksome and interest in sacred things become dull and secondary - it is high time to stir themselves, turn over a new leaf, and strive for a renewal in the Holy Spirit. That which is lame and weak - needs to be healed. Backsliders must return and take a fresh hold, and set out with a new vigor. And as Timothy says, stir up the gift of God that is in them.

So the alarm stated that they were to strengthen that which was about to fold up.

✓ Third, they were to (improve their work.) It was that they had become lax and complaining with reference to the church. And their religious duties are erksome and indeed sacred things are being done in a dull and secondary way - it is high time to stir oneself and turn over a new leaf and strive for a renewal

What was being

done was being done with a hit and miss fashion. It was done grudgingly. Now, we might turn this to some tonight that are serving in the church in some capacity - but they are doing so grudgingly. They just think that they will do it out of duty. Now this ought to be because of a new heart, high resolve, and earnest devotion. Or else everything else will fail.

✓ 1.3 ✓ Fourth, (remember your conversion experience.) V. 3. The things how you have received them. And thirdly, he said, these things which you have seen and heard - recall to mind. How it was in the beginning. Do you remember how they had been received and heard with holy action. The Apostles had preached to them and labored among them in order to bring them to faith in Christ. With what glad devotions they had grabbed hold of the word of Christ. That was brought to them - how different were their feelings, their zeal, and their earnestness. And by honest repentance, they were to get themselves back again to that same devotion. And that same hopeful conclusion. And this alarm which was sounded specifies that they remember their conversion.

✓ Fifth, (renew your consecration by repentance) Hold fast and repent. In this alarm to wake up the church - they were called on to get themselves back to their first love. And Jesus enforces and impresses these demands by giving them this startling alarm. Man is rational and Jesus does not come like a tyrant. But he asks of man and invites him to come because he is a moral being and cannot escape his responsibility. And his life is going to revolve in faithfulness or failure. He has promised again to come and receive all of his faithful ones unto himself. When that coming is to be - he has ~~not~~ not told us and no man knoweth.

✓ Sixth, (judgement is coming like a thief.) Now if you don't wake up from this slumbering - he says that the hour is going to come upon you and will it

find you ready and waiting for it - or will you be indifferent and unready. And will you be cut off from the honors of the kingdom.

What if the great day should be suddenly. And like a thief. And what if it would fall upon this day and you were found in the condition that you are. I suspect that you would want a little more time to make better preparation for it than just having a name. But slumbering, what could they expect in that case. To be accounted unworthy. So the alarm is to wake up - shake off this deadness. At what hour I will come, you do not know. All sleepy and unwatchful people shall be taken by surprise. Nor is there anything in the Scripture more constantly used by the Holy Spirit or better fitted to stir up sleepy Christians to their duties or to tone them up from decaying when this doctrine of the coming again of Jesus Christ. Be watchful for this day. Here is a solemn command to keep one awake and watching. No man knows the day nor the hour. Whether for the warning of the wicked or the encouragement of the saint. It ought to stir man's heart - because the Lord is at hand - behold, he cometh. The time has come that judgement must begin.

This may be one reason why Christianity is so flabby and lacking in life, no earnestness, no challenge to be ready, and the great doctrine of the near - the coming of Christ has so much dropped out of our thinking, out of our belief and understanding of the church. It's even dropped out of our preaching. If people could but remember and realize - that any day or night the trumpet of judgement might be sounded. And our prayer is, that the church might awake for this momentous thing.

What guarantee have we dear friends, that any moment might not be our last. Who can tell how long he has to live, or how quickly the trumpet of judgement may sound, the dead be raised, and the saints be changed, and caught

Luther, in giving his belief said, it would be about Easter time that the Lord would come. If it should be, what if it would be the Easter of this present year. Or if it should be the Christmas of this year that we are in. I do not know the time, for no man knoweth. But it is just as likely to be in such a year as this - as any year so far.

Let us not trifle with this possibility. Let us heed here this startling alarm given here by our Lord as he gives us admonition. Get yourselves awake. Go about your duty - repair the things that remain, and strengthen the things that are weak, and get the wrong things straightened out. Less he comes upon you like a thief and disaster will become your life.

III. A Select Few - V. 4-6

V. 4- We come now to a description of a specific few who are secure.

A few names, first have not defiled their garments. And second, they shall walk in white, and third, they are worthy - they deserve.

Now very seldom is there a church that comes so corrupt, that they do not have some genuine Christians left in it. There is no visible church in which all the members can be counted as saints. But there are some who have confessed and are in the church, and are good faithful children of God. Remember there was Enoch, and Noah, in the midst of a whole dreadful generation. Which brought on the flood. There was Job among all those people who was a righteous man. There was Abraham among the worshippers of idols in the land of Ur. There was Lot in the land of Sodom. And in the midst of a slumbering church at Sardis - there was some exceptions. There were a select few, who

We must not conclude that when we see an unfatal situation - that everything is ill. The stars have not all gone out because the sky is overcast. We may search in this wilderness - but the spring will come. Ahab had destroyed the prophets of the Lord. And Elijah thought that he alone survived. Faithful among the faithless. But he was reminded that there were 7,000 that had not bowed their knee to Baal. So even the entire nation had a remnant that fear the Lord, who spake often, one to another.

It is wrong for us to assume that because there is sham in our religion, because there are so many faithless people, in the church, so much empty profession, so many betrayals of confidence, so much deceit, so much insincerity and unlove, so much unloveliness, so much boastfulness. God has not left himself without witnesses. There are some names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments. There are some good men. There are men in whom life was still preserved and presented. Men who stood by the faith, and were lights in their country. They were the salt of the earth. In fact, they are the reason why things are still going on in this church in the midst of the world. A few names on your church roll represent active and upright Christians. They have not defiled their garments. They have not partaken of the community sins. Their character is unstained.

They were the few among the many. The spiritual among the worldly. The pure among the vile. The awaken among the sleeping. The living among the dead. The saved among the lost. And the victorious among the defeated.

Now Jesus describes these people. They have not defiled their garments. A man's clothing is that which is next to him. And in which he puts himself

And no one in his right mind goes around naked. Even though some individuals do so today. It is not the stripping off of the proper garments in which alone a man can properly live. But all these natural surroundings, his cares, his anxieties. And they are our proper clothing. Remember silver will tarnish unless pains are taken to keep it clean and bright. So in your surroundings, if you are not on guard - your vestments are liable to become soiled with impurity. True Christianity does not try to get away from ordinary life but to live and act in such a way as to keep our garments cleaned - washed and made white in the blood of the lamb. If the church as such is dead or asleep, there is no reason why we as individuals should be. Others are unclean. Then we should go and continue to keep them unspotted. Joseph passed through the trials as a prince of honor. Daniel maintained his purity in the courts of Babylon. Now we are going to have witnesses, errors, and infirmities, and weaknesses, that will cleave to us all of our lives. We cannot travel without dust. Now there were some people, a few in Sardis, that managed to keep their garments clean. They maintained this by living faith. They had turned their idols to the living God. Now if you are living a profession of lie - then it is time for you to change. They may have had a hard struggle.

But Jesus commended them for their faithfulness. He says they were humble, even though there was a slumbering church. He knows them - then he takes them into account. They were perhaps the least popular, and may have been hated, but perhaps they were credited with being religious, to strict, etc. But they continued on to serve in spite of those in the church who were disturbed, trouble-makers, and took on the color of the world. They were not unknown to Jesus. And they had a good place in Heaven. If we are true to our Christian faith, then Jesus will pronounce us blessed. And he assures us a great place in Heaven.

They are worthy and they deserve this.

Though there were sleeping saints - when you go to a museum of natural history, you there meet the great animals of America. They are life-like. They are mounted exactly as they lived. And any school child can tell you the difference.

(Ancient Manner -
The story, the corpse of dead men rise to man the ship. Dead men pull the oars, dead men raise the sails, dead men steer the vessel. Can you think of anything so silly. But look at the church of Jesus Christ and hear dead men filling the pews, dead men running the machines. Jesus said, I know thy works. You have a name to live - but you are about dead. You are fast sleep. The good things have been from beginning to end.

V. 5 - They shall walk with me in white dress.

Second, they shall not blot or erase their name from the book of life.

And of course, the chapter ends by - you who have ears listen to what the spirit has to say.

Now these are going to walk in white robes or white raiment. Now white was the emblem of exaltation. In ancient times, in the priest's council of examination if a man was found imperfect - he clothed and veiled in black. But if all was right - he was clothed in white and passed to the dignity of the priest most high. So all Christians are called to be priests of God. The Jewish Scribes were ambitious to walk in long robes. They considered it a thing of dignity and honor. Even some of the Romans wore white robes as badges of their high rank. Perhaps there were some such in the church at Sardis. To whom the people looked up to with reverence. The same shall be clothed in white raiment. This is something that is in the future for us. This robing was the divine approval of the saint's character. The inner

character of the undefiled, finds its ultimate outward expression in the investments of the white robes. Not defiled, is freedom from disgraceful stain. The clean garments entitled the wearer to the spotless robe. This is some of the color used in revelation - white stone, white horse, white cloud, white throne, and white robes. The believing, faithful, and pure shall walk in unbroken fellowship with him.

The concluding part with this church at Sardis has to do with - he will not blot or erase their names from the book of life. Because of his refusal to yield to the demands of emperor worship - he might have his name blotted out of the record book of men as he is added to the list of martyrs. But his name is still in the lamb's book of life and he is secure. What is the book of life. The exact force of not blotting out of the name in all Greek cities and later in Rome there was an enrollment of citizens, as distinguished from the general population, who had no rights of citizenship. Citizenship could be forfeited by infidelity to the city. A Christian citizen in Sardis might lose his citizenship on account of loyalty to Christ. Of course death ended this earthly citizenship. But in contrast he was going to have an enrollment in the heavenly new Jerusalem. And this would never be forfeited. There would be no probationary list. Rev. 22:19.

What then is this book of life. By its very name - it is a register of immortals - he that believeth in me shall never die. All his elect as God saw them for the foundation of the world are put on this list. Rev. 13:8 and 17:8. Each name is written when the owner is justified. Isa. 4:3. It has the meaning in Rev. 20:15 and Daniel 12:1.

There was a hymn written based on Rev. 20:15 - when thou my righteous judge shall come - to take thy ransomed people home. Shall I alone then

hard. Oh, can I bear the piercing thought. What if my name shall be left out.

When one submits to become a Christian, he then is enrolled in the Commonwealth of Heaven. As well as a (church book roll) on earth. But here is a fidelity - there are many names who have perhaps been entered on the church roll. Some of them may be as infants - who have been baptized. But have through the years failed to acknowledge and stand for Jesus Christ. The sadness here is unspeakable to think how many blots and erasures there are upon the book by reason of failure with people, who once made an attempt to follow this way of life but dropped out without finishing the race.

There are some names which shall never be blotted out. They are true faithful followers. Though they are blotted out of the rolls on this earth - but God here has a book of remembrance.

He says I will confess his name before my father, and before his angels. You get the impact of this. The man who requires us to confess him before men is the one Christ Jesus, who is going to confess us before the Father which is in Heaven. It is then the least that we should think of doing. Is coming and making our confession of faith in him on this earth. Now people may have their names put on church rolls in different ways. They may be canonized. Yes, many names may be there in the book and the newspaper, in the church records of some humble congregation. But isn't it wonderful to be on the records of the redeemed. There are names which the owner will not be ashamed of. These certainly are wonderful words spoken by our Lord.

If we had time to go back in history and take some of these men like Peter Waldo, in 1170, he who heard a Christian hymn and then went on his way to preach the good news of Jesus on the streets. And his followers, the Waldenses

as a church began to sow seed in a dark world. But because of a holy crusade in 1208 by authority, they were wiped out.

✓ Or we think of John Wycliffe, 1320, who read the book and translated it into the language of the English people. Went up and down the countryside preaching the riches of the grace of God. After he died, because he died before the church could cease him, they dug up his body and burned it publicly and scattered his ashes on the river swift.

✓ Or the man John Huss, 1367, who read the translation of the Bible and began to preach in Bohemia and thousands turned out to hear him and were converted. They sentenced him to be burned at the stake. They put a crown on his head. The great heretic. On his way to the stake, and he said, with joy I wear this crown of shame for the love of him who wore the crown of throns.) He sang a hymn and prayed a prayer.

✓ In 1452 Savon Arola, a flaming evangelist, by Papal council he was denounced and condemned to hang. He was first hanged and then he was burned with fire.

✓ In 1528, in Vienna, Balthazar Hubmeir was (burned) at a stake by the church. His faithful (wife) which he loved, was (drowned) for her love and devotion to Jesus. This man preached from the original Greek and Hebrew language. And year after year he baptized 6,000, 8,000, 12,000. Because of his preaching they burned him at the stake and drowned his wife.

✓ Felix Mantz, of the city of Zurich, read the Scriptures in the streets and in the fields. And thousands listened to him and the church condemned him. And they said, so he lacks water - lets give him lots of it. And they drowned him in the river Lammont.

✓ In 1628, John Bunyon made (shoe laces) in prison and passed them to his blind daughter Mary. One of the famous and yet pathetic passages in English literature describes him looking through the bars at prison at the little blind girl who sold his shoe laces to help support this Baptist preacher's family, the 12 years he stayed in jail for preaching the Gospel.

✓ At Sardis they had a (few names) that were immortal - I will not blot your name out. From the church roll in this life - yes. But from the church of the first born whose names are written in Glory.

✓ In 1617 the 21st of (October) (Martin Luther) was excommunicated from the church. His soul was co-signed to ever lasting Hell and damnation. But God said I will not blot your name out of the book of life.

And they shall walk in white, these men of the cloth, of the vestment. Who dressed like the minister. They were excommunicated, defrocked, and when they brought John Huss to the flame - they began to tear off the ministerial garb. And so we say, fine, burn it up. Burn it up. But the Lord said, I will clothe them with white raiment. Expressive of their office - because they are worthy.

You who have ears, listen to what the spirit has to say. Ex. 32:32 - Noses said, forgive them of their sin. Concerning the golden calf. Blot me out of thy book.

Ps. 69:28 - let the wicked be blotted out of the book of the living. And not be written with the righteous. He was praying concerning the wicked. Those who had crucified Jesus.

✓ Covenanters in Scotland were hunted and shot down like animals.

These poor humble people would gather in their cottages and go over their Scriptures and pray to God. They would covenant together to read the Bible.

There was a faithful couple, John Brown and Isabelle, his wife. The minister who performed the ceremony of their wedding informed her to hold him close to your heart. John Brown had 20 sheep - that was his living but he loved God. He read the Scriptures in the homes of the people, and led in prayer. They hunted him and tracked him down and a man in the church by the name of Claverhause took six soldiers to shoot him before his own humble cottage. They brought out his wife with a baby in her arms that she could witness the execution of her husband. John Brown asked if he might pray. He sat down and prayed and then stood up fearlessly with great courage. The soldiers lined up before him to execute him. They looked at the man of God, looked at his courage and his noble wife and baby - all six men put down their guns and said we can't do it. Then Claverhause cursed them in the name of the church. Took his pistol and walked up to John Brown and blew out his brains. When he fell in his blood - he turned to Isabelle Brown and he said, and what do you think of your husband now. She replied, sir, I thought much good of him in life - and now much more in death.

For they are worthy and I will confess their name before my Father and the angels. So here is a message of hope and salvation that lives in fire and in blood. And it lives today. And we ought to bless his name that we are a part and that we belong to that blessed company of God's immortal saints.