



The Revelation of Jesus Christ

CLA – 2016

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Chapter Three

Day of Discovery Background Video

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- **1 “To the angel of the church in Sardis write: He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars, says this: ‘I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. 2 Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God. 3 So remember what you have received and heard; and keep it, and repent. Therefore if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you. 4 But you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. 5 He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. 6 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’**

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How would you describe a church in our day, that is seen as being alive, but is actually dead?

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- **Sardis is called by Jesus, “the church that looks alive, but is actually dead”.**
- **To the world around them they looked like they had it together and were doing well, but Jesus had a different opinion.**
- **Maybe a warning for us is that when we have the approval of men we are probably on the wrong track.**

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- **What we've seen of the 1st century culture where the seven churches are, is that the people were very religious – all false religions, but they were not atheistic. (actually polytheistic)**
- **What we have also seen is that the pagan religions isolated the Christians unless they were willing to compromise what they believed.**
- **There were real social and economic penalties to pay when the Christians held fast to what they believed.**

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- **Whether it was burning a pinch of incense to Caesar in Ephesus, or attending the parties to Apollo at Thyatira, there was constant pressure on the Christians to conform.**
- **And, from the messages to the other churches it was apparent that a number of Christians were succumbing to the pressures.**
- **In Sardis, the cultural conditions were not much different – there was pressure to conform to the false worship systems in order to maintain your standard of living.**

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- **And in the case of Sardis, there is actual archaeological evidence that the Christians were giving in to the pressure to conform.**
- **From archaeological findings we see that in the market place in Sardis there were shops owned by Christians, and there were Roman eagles etched on the furnishings of the synagogue.**
- **So what? The so what is that if they were holding fast to the gospel without compromise, they could not have been owners of shops in the market place.**

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- **In our culture today, there is no pressure to worship false gods so much as there is subtle pressure to worship no God at all.**
- **Indeed, at Sardis there was a culture of inclusion when it came to gods – you could worship any god you want so long as you did not claim that your god was superior to other gods.**
- **So, you see now where the Christians of Sardis would run into problems when you consider that Jesus claimed to be the only way to Heaven.**

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- **In our day, when we claim that Jesus is the ONLY WAY TO HEAVEN it can get us in trouble as well.**
- **While the Truth may set us free, it may also lead us into a path of great trouble because there is no compromise position to “the way, the truth, and the life”.**
- **In fact, there is something in man’s sin nature that recoils at the very premise of a singular way to Heaven.**

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- If you want to incur the scorn of others, just stand fast on the idea *that Jesus is the only way to Heaven.*
- Beware of those who say, “Jesus is the only way to Heaven for me, but you may have another way”.
- If we believe that the Bible is the standard of truth, then we have no where to go on John 14:6 other than to assert that no one comes to the Father but by Jesus.

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- I really do not mean to introduce confusion to this topic, but I am unable to ponder this narrow way of Christ without thinking about what C.S. Lewis said on the subject.
- “In his classic volume, *Mere Christianity*, C. S. Lewis makes this generous confession: “[This] used to puzzle me. Is it not frightfully unfair that this new life should be confined to people who have heard of Christ and been able to believe in him? But the truth is God has not told us what his arrangements about the other people are. *We do know that no man can be saved except through Christ*; we do not know that only those who know Him can be saved through Him.”

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- One cautionary note on C.S. Lewis' quote – there is no scripture that gives us hope of heaven apart from Christ, in fact, we do have John 14:6 (I am the way the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except by me).
- That said, C.S. Lewis gave this some serious thought and should not be ignored. He held out that the Judge of all the earth would have the right to apply the blood of Christ to those who never heard. He doesn't say that He does, or even would, only that He could.

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- **‘We know that God will deal fairly with those who have not received a direct presentation of the gospel, just as He will deal fairly with those who have.’ Robert Velarde**
- **Gen 18:25 “That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”.**
- **Deut 29: 29 “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.”**

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- The most conservative approach to the “are the heathen lost?” question. From gotquestions.org
- Instead of debating the fate of those who have never heard, we, as Christians, should be doing our best to make sure they do hear. We are called to spread the gospel throughout the nations (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8). We know people reject the knowledge of God revealed in nature, and that must motivate us to proclaim the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ. Only by accepting God’s grace through the Lord Jesus Christ can people be saved from their sins and rescued from an eternity apart from God. If we assume that those who never hear the gospel are granted mercy from God, we will run into a terrible problem. If people who never hear the gospel are saved, it is logical that we should make sure no one ever hears the gospel. The worst thing we could do would be to share the gospel with a person and have him or her reject it. If that were to happen, he or she would be condemned. People who do not hear the gospel must be condemned, or else there is no motivation for evangelism. Why run the risk of people possibly rejecting the gospel and condemning themselves when they were previously saved because they had never heard the gospel?

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- **So it is believed that the sin in Sardis church was a compromise on Jesus as the only way to Heaven, and that 'kills' the message.**
- **In a polytheistic society where it's fashionable to worship any, or many gods, to proclaim your God as superior brings consequences with it.**
- **However, to NOT proclaim the truth brings consequences from the One who has the power to make the consequences have permanent affects.**

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- **Jesus calls the church to repentance and says “if you don’t repent, I will come upon you like a thief in the night and you will not know when I am coming”.**
- **The very idea of judgment coming when it’s least expected would have sounded a familiar note with the church at Sardis.**
- **In their history there were two occasions when the city, considered impregnable, was set upon, and conquered, by its enemies when the citizens thought they were perfectly safe.**

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- **In verse #2, Jesus says, “Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die.”**
- **Maybe the most refreshing message around the theme of repentance is that so long as we are breathing, it seems like we can still repent.**
- **Think about it – God wants us to repent and be saved from the consequences of our sin, and if we could see our situation clearly, so would we!**

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- **Verse #5 He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.**
- **First of all “he who overcomes” – (1st John 5:4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith)**
- **White was the customary color for the winners, overcomers, in athletic conquests.**

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- **So what about the phrase, “and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.”**
- **There was a list in each synagogue (where many 1st century Christians worshipped) of who was a member in good standing and therefore exempt from the Caesar's command to proclaim him as Lord.**
- **Christians who got too carried away with this “Jesus” thing could be removed from the list by being blotted out.**

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- **Jesus says, “you don’t have to worry about that with me”. You are not in my book because you are sinless people – you are in my book because you believe in my sinless Son.**
- **Several places in scripture the ‘book’ is mentioned along with the idea of being blotted out.**
- **The one thing you do not find, except for Ex 32:33, is any actual blotting out done by God.**

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- **Ex 32:31** Then Moses returned to the Lord, and said, “Alas, this people has committed a great sin, and they have made ² a god of gold for themselves. **32** “But now, if You will, forgive their sin—and if not, please blot me out from Your book which You have written!” **33** The Lord said to Moses, “Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book.
- **But there must be more to verse #33 above than meets the eye because if it stands alone, then no one, but Jesus, would be in the book.**

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- **So when Jesus says to the believers in Sardis, “I will not erase his name from the book of life” He is very much affirming the security they have in Him.**
- **The synagogue offered no security for them – the Jewish leaders were fickle and used their exemption from proclaiming Caesar as Lord as leverage to keep their members in line.**
- **Jesus is assuring them He changes not – what He promised to do, He would do, and they could count on Him.**

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- **In verse #2 we read – “Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die;”**
- **So what had remained? Probably some form of the gospel truth – the substitutionary atonement of Jesus through His death, burial, and resurrection.**
- **If they had backed away from the truth that Jesus is the only way to Heaven they were to wake up, and go back and strengthen their message.**

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- To be clear, to strengthen their message on Jesus was certain to bring them painful consequences, but to remain as they are would bring even more painful eternal consequences.
- The Muslims of the world practice a form of having a superior god when they yell, “Allahu Akbar” for it means “God (Allah) is greater.”
- They do in ignorance what we are called to do as children of the light – proclaim the truth that God is not only greater than other gods, but that He is the only true God.



Questions / Comments