

Differences Between a Living and Dying Church

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- Revelation 3:1–6

3 *“And to the angel of the church in Sardis write,
‘These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and
the seven stars: “I know your works, that you have a name
that you are alive, but you are dead.*

2 *Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that
are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect
before God.*

3 *Remember therefore how you have received and heard;
hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will
come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour
I will come upon you.*

4 *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.*

5 *He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments,
and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but 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.” ’*

Introduction

- A while ago, we started looking at Revelation, particularly chapter 2 and 3, because in this book, the apostle John received a series of visions.
 - And the vision that begins the book of Revelation is a vision of Christ in His church.

- The first few chapters are really about the present: Christ and His church, Christ in His church,
 - Christ speaking to His church.

A. Geographic and Physical Background

- In Asia Minor, there were seven churches that had been established in seven cities.
 - Basically, when Paul founded the church in Ephesus, that church became a strong church
 - and took the gospel, according to Acts 19:10,

¹⁰ *And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.*

- Those churches ended up throughout all the rest of Asia Minor – which is Modern Turkey
 - – and those churches were established in many cities.
- Seven of them are mentioned here.
 - But some 30 years had passed now since the founding of those churches.
 - And those churches had settled into certain kinds of personalities, if you will,
 - A certain kind of character.
- One of the things that we have to remember is that there is nothing present in the Word of God just to fill it us...
 - It's all there for a reason!
 - We HAVE to believe that this is so for the mention of these SEVEN Church when there were far more churches founded in the general area that these were in!

1. Historical Background

- After 25 or 30 or maybe a little more years, they began to differ from each other in some ways.
 - And at this particular time, at the very end of the first century, the Lord reveals letters to these seven churches.
 - He gives them by revelation to John,

- John writes them down as a portion of the book of Revelation with all the rest of his visions,
- and then they are taken by the representatives of those churches
 - who came to visit John on the Isle of Patmos
 - and are distributed back to their churches.
- Another Interesting item:
 - Sardis's capture twice in its history while watchmen neglected their duty became a cautionary tale of misguided complacency and lack of vigilance.
 - Although Jesus' rebuke identifies no specific source of attack, this congregation was similarly asleep, at death's door.
- Most of the impressive Roman-era remains now visible at Sardis were constructed after the tragic earthquake of A.D. 17.
 - The emperor Tiberius helped sponsor reconstruction efforts, earning greater local renown for himself.
 - In John's day the civic structures included
 - a theater, a stadium, a central marble road, and multiple temples (esp. the monumental temple of Artemis).
 - Many Jewish inscriptions also exist in Sardis, confirming the multiple references in Josephus to Sardis's Jewish population

2. Each of these churches mentioned in chapter 2 and 3 is a real church and a real place,

- and we made that clear before
- Each of these churches had particular characteristics and particular needs.
 - We also took a look at their...

3. Spiritual Background

- Now, Five of these Churches were in some serious trouble.
 - Two of them are only commended: the church at **Smyrna** and the church at **Philadelphia**.
 - The other five are condemned in some way.

- It was not easy to
 - live the gospel,
 - preach the gospel,
 - and uphold the gospel
 - in that period of time at the end of the first century:
- Generally speaking, Christ had been rejected,
 - the apostles had been killed.
- John, the final apostle,
 - who really was the patriarch of these churches in Asia Minor,
 - was in exile on Patmos:
 - a very old man,
 - breaking rocks with the rest of the prisoners until his death.
- The church was under persecution, and
 - the persecution was fierce.
- And so what you have here, a startlingly similar situation to a good bit of history and to our situation in this country right now...
 - are seven churches
 - living in a hostile world
 - under persecution and
 - the character that develops in that situation.
- The Lord recognizes
 - the character of each church,
 - the issues in each church, and
 - sends a letter to each one; and
 - they're contained in these two chapters: chapter 2 and 3.
- These are unique churches, and
 - yet they're kinds of churches that exist in all periods of time, including now.
- So in a sense, these letters are timeless, and
 - they have literally spoken to every generation since then to this present one,
 - and they will continue to be read and preached and understood by every generation until the Lord Returns!!

- We come to the church in Sardis, chapter 3, the church in Sardis in chapter 3.
 - The message to this church is really sad;
 - let me read it to you:

“To the angel – ”

- or the messenger, the messenger who’ll take this letter back to 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. Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed – ”

- or fulfilled

“ – in the sight of My God. 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. 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. 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. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. ’”

4. Applicational Background

a. Sardis Was a Dead Church

- I think you all know what a light year is.
 - A light year is the distance light goes in a year,
 - moving at 186,000 miles a second;
 - that’s a light year.
- I was reading about one particular star that astronomers estimate is 33 years away from earth.

- It would take 33 years for that light to reach earth.
- This particular article went on to say that that star could have been plunged into darkness 25 years ago.
- It could have died.
- But light would still be pouring down to earth.
- It would be shining in the sky as brightly as if the star was still alive.

b. Sardis Still Shined SOME Light

- The church at Sardis is something like that.
 - It was dead, but it was still shining by the light of a brilliant past.
- But It was a dead church.
 - That is the worst thing that could ever be said about a church: it's dead.

c. The Letter's Emphasis is on Sardis as Dead

- It is for us to think through the “WHY” that this “deadness” is set out for us in such definite and clear terms...
- The church, by definition, is to be alive.
 - It is a place where
 - God lives,
 - where Christ lives,
 - where the Holy Spirit lives,
 - where believers are alive.
 - They've been given life.
 - A church is to be the fellowship of those who possess eternal life.
- Not this church.
 - This church is dead, and the emphasis there is speaking about spiritual death.
 - Like Matthew 21:19, and our Lord's sort of depiction of Israel – leaves, but no fruit.

¹⁹ *And seeing a fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on it but leaves, and said to it, “**Let no fruit***

grow on you ever again.” Immediately the fig tree withered away.

- This is the church, the first church of the tares you might say: “You are dead.”
 - You could say that the congregation in Sardis was the very reverse of the congregation in Smyrna.
 - Smyrna was being put to death and yet lived.
 - Sardis appeared to be alive; it was dead.
 - A dead church, living a fake life.

B. It was an Actual Place

- Now, remember, this is an actual place and an actual congregation: a dead church.
 - What wasn’t dead, according to verse 2, was about to die.

² Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God.

- So what does our Lord say to a dead church,
 - a church that literally
 - has succumbed to the pressure of the world;
 - that has let the world in,
 - adopted the world,
 - tolerated sin,
 - committed all the sins of the churches we’ve studied before:
 - It has left its first love like Ephesus,
 - courted the world like Pergamos,
 - tolerated sin and even advocated it like Thyatira.
 - And now, sin has taken over and it’s full of deadness.
 - There’s no real life there to speak of.

C. The Lord's Introduction

1. An Interesting Introduction

- Now, the Lord introduces Himself to this church in a very interesting way.
 - All of the introductions of the writer, who is the Lord, are borrowed from chapter 1,
 - the vision in chapter 1.
- Here, in addition to the vision in chapter 1,
 - our Lord identifies Himself with chapter 1, verse 4.
- He calls Himself

“...the one who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars.”

a. What do you mean “the seven Spirits of God”?

- That appears several times in the book of Revelation:
 - chapter 4, verse 5;
 - chapter 5, verse 6.
 - God is identified in Ch. 4 and 5 in heavenly scenes as possessing the seven Spirits of God.
- **the seven spirits of God** (cf. note on 1:4–6).
 - A figurative description of the one Holy Spirit,
 - who issues an edict to each of the seven churches (2:7, 11, 17; etc.).
 - He will also appear as the Lamb's seven eyes, sent throughout the earth (5:6).
 - Jesus knows this church's reality (**dead**),
 - not just its **reputation** (**alive**);
 - he holds **the seven stars** that signify the churches' true identities.

2. More Than One Holy Spirit?

- What are we talking about since we've been taught that there's only one Holy Spirit?

a. Isaiah's Comments

- The best way to understand that is to look with me for just a moment at Isaiah, chapter 11; Isaiah, chapter 11.
 - In Isaiah, chapter 11, if you just go down to verse 2, you begin to see an identification of the Holy Spirit that has multiple aspects:

“The Spirit of the Lord – ”

- verse 2

“ – will rest on Him – ”

- will rest on the Messiah,

“ – the branch that comes Jesse. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him.”

- And then it goes on to say,

“The spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.”

b. One Spirit – Six Characteristics

- The Spirit of the Lord is one, and then there are six more identifying characteristics.
 - He is the Spirit of the Lord, the spirit of wisdom, of understanding, of counsel, strength, knowledge, and the fear of the Lord, or the spirit of worship.
 - This is the fullness of the Holy Spirit.
 - So when the Bible talks about the seven spirits,
 - it's talking about the seven-fold spirit.
- It would have been helpful if translators had stated it that way.
 - So the one writing to the church is the one who literally possesses the Holy Spirit.
 - It was the Son who sent the Spirit.
 - The Spirit can be thought of as the Spirit of Christ.

c. Here – The Son of God has the Fullness of the Spirit

- So here, the Son of God who has
 - the fullness of the Holy Spirit, and
 - who also holds in His hand the seven stars.
- That too is taken out of chapter 1, you remember, where it depicts Christ holding the seven stars in His hand; and the seven stars are the seven ministers of the churches.
 - Revelation 1:12–17

¹² Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³ and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. ¹⁴ His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; ¹⁵ His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; ¹⁶ He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength. ¹⁷ And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, “Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last.

- It’s both exciting and very intimidating that there will indeed come a day when you and I will turn and see this same Lord Jesus Christ!
 - I suspect we will fall at His feet as dead men as well!!
- So the author here identifies Himself, the Lord,
 - as the one who possesses the fullness of the Spirit,
 - and who possesses also the ministers,
 - the pastors, the leaders of the church.
- The author is the one who gives the Holy Spirit to the church and
 - sovereignly leads through pastors who are pastors who are faithful.

3. Why Does He Identify Himself This Way?

- Now, why does He identify Himself in this way?
 - Because it seems as if, here in Sardis particularly, that's exactly what's missing.
 - Here is a church pretty much without the Holy Spirit, generally speaking.
 - Here is a church, obviously, with pastors who are not faithful,
 - who do not belong to the Lord.

D. It is Interesting What This Intro ISN'T

- Here, the Lord identifies Himself in an interesting way –
 - not in judgment,
 - not as one who's omniscient and sees everything with laser eyes and
 - not as One comes with burnished bronze feet to trample out judgment in His church.

1. What Sardis Already WAS

- There's really no judgment here as such because this is a dead church to start with.
 - It is the description of the one who writes the letter that speaks to the real issue;
 - the one who has the Holy Spirit and
 - who has in His hand true ministers,
- He writes to a church that **has** neither, that has **neither**.
 - They have **forfeited** the Holy Spirit and faithful leadership.
 - They're being **led by false leaders void** of the Holy Spirit.
 - The **life and power** of the Holy Spirit is not present.
- The **illuminating** of the Holy Spirit is not there.
 - The **enabling** of the Holy Spirit is **not there**.
- There's **no godly leadership** there.
 - **Without the Holy Spirit** and **without godly leadership**,
- This church was dead:
 - a church **dominated by the flesh**,

- **dominated by sin,**
- **dominated by unbelief;**
- **mostly, mostly **populated by the unregenerate,****
- **by the unregenerate; no life at all –**
- although there **would be some believers there who were indifferent** and some **who were faithful.**

E. Now, Just What Was Sardis?

- What is this place?
 - We've seen 4 of the Churches so far:
 - Ephesus – The Loveless Church
 - Smyrna – The Persecuted Church
 - Pergamos – The Compromising Church
 - Our last one – Thyatira - The Corrupt Church
 - Well, there are only three messengers left to take a letter:
 - one to Sardis, one to Philadelphia, and one to Laodicea, and it's over.
 - So we've reached the fifth city on the postal route in Asia Minor on this sort of journey.

1. A Rich and Sinful City

- Sardis is rich and Sardis is sinful.
 - It is the ancient capital of the Lydian kingdom,
 - going all the way back to 1,200 years before Christ;
 - It was rich in gold, rich in silver.
- There are some historical indications that Sardis might have been the first place where gold and silver were minted into coins.
 - There was a river there that seemed to be rich in gold from which the gold was mined.
 - Because of its wealth, a city that endured many wars,
 - they were usually victorious because of their geographic location.
- They became a center for wool and dying,
 - things that were particularly common in the ancient world.

- By the middle of the sixth century, the city attained such a – this is B.C. – the city attained such a high level of respect,
 - that when its downfall came at the hands of a little known enemy,
 - the Greek cities received the news of it with disbelief.
 - It was conquered.
 - It was conquered not once, but it was conquered twice.
 - It was conquered in 549 B.C.
 - It was conquered again in 195 B.C.
 - The Persians conquered it,
 - and then Antiochus the Great, the Greek, conquered it.

2. A Center for False Worship

- By the time we come to the New Testament era, there's a temple there to Caesar, to honor Caesar,
 - and there is a temple there to the Empress Livia.
 - There is the normal idolatry there.
- Seven hundred years before this letter, Sardis was one of the great cities in the world.
 - If you go there today, you'll find nothing but a pile of ruins near a little village called Sart.
- But once, it was the glory of Lydian Empire, and
 - it's greatest king was a man named Croesus.
 - Have you heard that name? Have you heard "rich as Croesus"?
 - Unlimited luxury and wealth.

3. Geography and Population

- Sardis stood 30 miles southeast of Thyatira in the fertile Hermus valley near a range of mountains,
 - and it was elevated about 1,500 feet high;
 - almost impregnable,
 - sticking out from Mount Tamalpais like some kind of granite pier.
 - Seemed to be impregnable.
 - Under Croesus, it reached its greatest heights; and

- under Croesus, it plunged and collapsed.
- It had some famous people.
 - You remember the name Thales, the first Greek philosopher?
 - You remember the name Solon, a wise legislator; or
 - Xerxes, the great general; or
 - Aesop, the fable weaver?
- This was some great city that had fallen into a degenerating cycle.
 - 17 A.D. an earthquake hit it, massive earthquake, turning it into rubble.
 - And Tiberius Caesar came and rebuilt it, and so that's why they built a temple to Tiberius Caesar in the city of Sardis.
- Its history was a history of degeneration.
 - From its glory days under Croesus, it had crumbled into nothing and been rebuilt by the Romans.
 - Politically it had declined,
 - morally it had declined,
 - economically it had declined, and
 - the Christian church also was in a rotting condition.
- Its vitality and power were gone.
 - It was a kind of corpse, a degenerate church in a degenerating city.

4. Now Let's Think Specifically About the church...

- Verse 1 talks about the church in Sardis.
 - What do we know about it?
 - Basically nothing.
 - We don't know who founded it.
 - We don't have names of people associated with it in Scripture, so we don't know anything.
- Obviously it was founded, as I mentioned earlier, in that period of time when out of Ephesus, all of Asia Minor was reached with the gospel, as Acts 19:10 says.

¹⁰ *And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.*

- We do have one name of one pastor, one famous pastor of that church at a later time by the name of Melito, M-E-L-I-T-O,
 - who some think wrote the first commentary on Revelation.
- There's no mention of persecution against this church,
 - although there might have been some;
 - there must have been some.
- There's no mention of bad theology.
 - There's no mention of any false teachers.
 - There's no mention of any compromise with the world.
 - There's no mention of any sin.
- But the church must have imbibed all of that because it was dead – no spiritual life.
 - It's just amazing that that could happen in less time than I have been pastor here at VF Baptist.
- The spiritual history of Sardis church paralleled the political history of that city, a steady decline into nothing.
 - The church had a name, church in Sardis, but it had no life.
- Let's think a bit about what the differences are between a Living Church and a Dead Church??

1) First, There is One Place Where They Are the Same - They Are Responsible to the Same Lord Jesus (1a)

3 *“And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, ‘These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars:*

2) There Is Similarity with the Other Letters/Churches!

A. Similarity of Pattern to the Letter

- All 7 of these letters follow the same basic pattern...
 - All of these letters follow a similar pattern:
 - Addressee
 - Author
 - Description of the Lord that impacts the message
 - Speaking of what the Lord KNOWS about the Addressee
 - Urging of the Lord regarding what the Addressee should do
 - Criticism and Complimenting of the Addressee
 - Promise made to the addressee
 - Target held up before the Addressee

B. There is Similarity in the Master of the Church and the Church People's Master

- None of these letters, this one included holds a distinction between the Church as a unit and the people that make up the Church.
 - This is very much different that some other, modern Liturgical Churches.
 - Roman Catholic, Episcopalian, Lutheran and some others all see a difference between the two.
 - For them, the “Church” is the larger “organism” and exists differently from the individuals that are a part of it.
 - That is NOT what the Bible teaches – The Scripture tells us that the “CHURCH” is the collective groups of believers who join together and worship, are taught and minister to and support one another in love.

- While there is a sure difference between two in formal identity,
 - we should note for a certainty that the Lord Jesus is the Master of the collective group that is the Church
 - and is ALSO the individual Master of each person who, by their redemption, has made themselves a part of that larger group!

C. Where/What/Is Sardis

- We've already noted that Sardis was a very luxurious city in Asia Minor, in the area that is now Turkey.
 - We've also said that this is likely the 5th stop on the postal route that seems to be that pattern that the one delivering these letters was following once John was finished with the writing of them.

D. What About the 7 Spirits and/or the 7 Stars

- And so to help us think through this letter to Sardis...
 -

3) *There is a Difference in Their Works (1b)*

"I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead."

A. The Omniscience of Christ

- First of all, again, we come to the reality of the omniscience of our Lord.
 - He sees everything, He misses nothing, and there is nothing to be commended in this unsaved church.
 - This church is the world.

1. This church is so defiled it is dead.

- Even the prior two, as serious as their issues were, is not in the shape that this one is!!
- It is decayed on the inside.
 - It is disintegrated; it is dry rot.
 - It is like any liberal church that
 - denies the Bible,
 - denies Christ,
 - denies the gospel:
 - it's dead.

*"You have a name that you are alive, but you are dead."
(1b)*

- Paul said something very similar over in Eph. 2:1 where he says a serious matter in the beginning of his discussion of Salvation by Grace Through Faith

*2 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses
and sins,*

- That's where that death is defined: dead in trespasses and sins.
 - Spiritual death is not just a function of lack of function.
 - It is a lack of the possession of Spiritual life
 - It is a serious matter!!

2. This is how the Lord defines and pictures spiritual death for us!!

- Colossians says essentially the same thing, Colossians 2:13,

*"Dead in transgression and the uncircumcision of your
flesh."*

- When it says dead, it means spiritually dead. This is a church full of unconverted people, unconverted people. We're used to that. We're used to that.
- There are churches attended by people and led by people who don't believe the Bible, don't believe in Christ, don't believe

the gospel: they're dead churches. But 30 years after the founding of the church, in the first century, so close to Christ? That is a warning in itself. Any church is in danger of dying when it gets caught up in the world, tolerates sins, abandons its first love – there's a progression here.

B. What are Works and To What do they Matter?

C. What is the “Name” and Why Does it Matter?

D. How Can a Church be Alive OR Dead? Why is That Important?

4) There is a Difference in Their Awareness (2)

² ***Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God.***

A. There is a Difference in their Perception of Their Personal State

B. What is the Need Here?

C. Note the Connection between being Watchful and Strengthening

5) *There is a Difference in What They Work at Strengthening (2b)*

Revelation 3:2 (NKJV)

² *Be watchful, and **strengthen the things which remain**, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God.*

D.

6) *There is a Difference in What They Believe to Be Alive vs. Dead (2c)*

² *Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God.*

A. A Living Church Has at Least SOME Spiritual Remnants

B. A Living Church Sees When SOME of Their Spiritual ID Threatens to Die

C. A Living Church Knows Where to Turn to Get Strength and Maintain Spiritual Life

D. A Living Church is More Concerned With Their Relationship With God Than Their Opinion of Themselves

7) There is a Difference in Their Attention to the Word of God (3)

³ Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.

A. A Living Church Roots Their Walk in Two Areas

- 1. It Is Rooted in Their Receiving of the Lord Jesus That Granted Them Redemption.*
- 2. It is Further Rooted and Nurtured by The Word of God...Study and Preached*
- 3. A Living Church Responds Rightly to God's Word*
- 4. A Living Church Repents When Necessary*

B. A Living Church KNOWS That God Will Deal with a Failure to Repent

8) There is Difference in the Character of Their Expectation of the Lord's Coming (3b)

³ Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.

9) There is a Difference in Their Understanding of Who Among Them are Redeemed and Who are Not (4)

*⁴ 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.*

A. They Know It, Likely, ISN'T Everyone

B. They Recognize What Sin and Failure to Repent Actually Does to One Who Professes Christ

C. The Truly Redeemed Understand the Real Need for Evangelism

10) There is a Difference in Attention to “Overcoming” (5)

⁵ He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.

A. Just What Does “Overcomer(s)” Speak of?

⁵ *He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments,..*

1. First, Initially, is a Term applied to Christ.

John 16:33 *These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”*

Cf. John 1:5

2. It is a Term With Personal or Military Overtones

- Numbers 13:30

³⁰ *Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, “Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it.”*

-

- 1 Samuel 7:10

¹⁰ *Now as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel. But the LORD thundered with a loud thunder upon the Philistines that day, and so confused them that they were overcome before Israel.*

- Job 41:9

⁹ *Indeed, any hope of overcoming him is false; Shall one not be overwhelmed at the sight of him?*

- Song of Solomon 6:5

⁵ Turn your eyes away from me,
For they have overcome me.
Your hair is like a flock of goats
Going down from Gilead.

3. Also, It is a Term applied to believers.

Rom 8:37 Yet in all these things we are **more than conquerors through Him who loved us.**

2 Cor 2:14 Now thanks be to God **who always leads us in triumph in Christ**, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.

1 John 2:13 I write to you, fathers, Because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, **Because you have overcome the wicked one.** I write to you, little children, Because you have known the Father.

1 John 5:4–5 For **whatever is born of God overcomes the world.** And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. **5 Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?**

Rev 2:7 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. **To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life**, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.” ’

Rev 2:11 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. **He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.**” ’

Rev 2:17 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. **To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat.** And I will give him a

white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it.” ’

Rev 2:26 And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations —

Rev 3:5 He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.

Rev 3:12 He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.

Rev 3:21 To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

- And at least **25 or 30 more uses**...including tis one!!
 - We can conclude that what the Lord is referring to here in Revelation 3 is the one who fights against Spiritual attack on the various realms...
 -

B. There are 4 Promises Made to the Overcomer in this verse

1. They will walk with Christ in white (4)

2. *They Will Be Clothed with White* (5; 3:18; 4:4; 6:11; 7:9, 13; 15:6; 19:8, 14)

3. *I Will Not Block His Name Out of the Book of Life* 3:5; cp. 22:18,19; Ex. 32:23; Ps. 69:28)

4. *I Will Confess His Name Before My Father and the Angels* (3:5)

- The Lord also **speaks of the one who overcomes being “clothed in White Garments”**

A. Their Clothing

⁵ *He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.*

1. *There are actually a couple things this first phrase implies:*

- The Certainty of the Reward*
- The Deservedness of the Reward*
- The Fullness of the Reward – full clothing*
- The “Cleanness” of the Reward*
- The Purity of the Reward*

2. *There are actually a number of things said regarding the one who overcomes in the whole Book...*

-
- The following images depict ways in which God will be God to those who conquer (cf. Rev. 21:7).

	<u>Promise</u>	<u>What Will Happen</u>	<u>Fulfillment</u>
1	2:7	will eat from the tree of life	22:2
2	2:11	will not be hurt by the second death	20:6; 21:7–8
3	2:17	will be given a white stone	21:11, 18–21
4	2:26–27; 3:21	will reign with Christ on his throne	20:4
5	2:28	will be given the morning star	21:23; 22:5, 16
6	3:5	will be clothed in bright garments	19:7–8; 21:2, 9–10
7	3:5	name will be in the book of life	21:27
8	3:12	will be made a pillar in God's temple	21:22–23
9	3:12	will participate in the new Jerusalem	21:10
10	3:12	will have God's name written on them	22:4

B. The Persistence of their Names

⁵ *He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.*

C. The Confession of their Names

⁵ *He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.*

11) There is a Difference in the Attention Paid to the Lord (6)

⁶ *“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” ’*

A. It is a Rhetorical Issue

B. It by-and-large Asks for a Given Answer

- Ears CAN hear and we ought to WANT to hear
 - ESPECIALLY given the involved items

C. It is a PLURAL Matter

Conclusion

- Jesus’ charge to the church is fivefold.
 - **First, the church is to “awake”** (3:2, 3).
 - The only other use of the verb in the book is in 16:15, a passage that recalls this one, where a blessing is given to the one who is awake and a warning to the one who is not.
 - Elsewhere in the New Testament the idea is to watch, to be alert (Matt 26:38, 40–41; Acts 20:31; 1 Cor 16:13; Col 4:2; 1 Pet 5:8), especially with respect to the coming of Jesus/the Day of the Lord (Matt 24:42–43;

25:13; Mark 13:34, 37-38; Luke 12:37; 1 Thess 5:6, 10).

- **This second element is in view in Jesus' warning that if the church does not "awake," he "will come like a thief [cf. 16:15], and you will not know at what hour I will come upon you" (3:3).**
 - The question, as we have seen several times, is when Jesus will come. Although the idea of Jesus/the Day of the Lord coming like a thief is strongly rooted in early Christian tradition (e.g., Matt 24:43–44; Luke 12:39–40; 1 Thess 5:2, 4; 2 Pet 3:10), the image would have provided a sobering reminder to the citizens of Sardis of the city's past history. According to Herodotus (History 1.84), during the siege of Sardis by Cyrus in 549 bc, a Persian soldier watched while one of the Lydian guards climbed down from the acropolis to retrieve a dropped helmet. During the night the soldier led a group of soldiers up the cliff by the same path and found the acropolis unguarded and everyone asleep. Polybius (Histories 7.15–18) records a similar incident during the siege of Sardis by Antiochus the Great in 214 bc. Not once, but twice the city of Sardis had fallen to its enemies because it had been so confident of its impregnability that it had failed to remain "awake." The second charge Jesus gives to the church is to "strengthen what remains and is on the point of death" (3:2; cf. Ezek 34:4). "Strengthen" is used only here in the book.
 - Third, the church is to "remember" what it received and heard (cf. 2:5).
 - Fourth, it is to "keep" what it received and heard (cf. 1:3; 2:26). Fifth, it is to "repent" (cf. 2:5 [twice], 16, 21 [twice], 22; 3:19).
- Despite the grave state of the church overall, Jesus does observe that there are "a few names [cf. 3:5] in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments" (3:4).
 - This is the first mention of "garments" in the book, but not the last. These people are further declared to be "worthy," a

word normally that will be reserved for God (4:11) and the Lamb (5:2, 4, 9, 12), but that will be used of “the saints and the prophets” in 16:6. To these believers Jesus promises that “they shall walk with me in white” (3:4). Unsoiled robes are not necessarily white. White, a color used in victory celebrations by the Romans, is already associated with Jesus (1:14) and with a promise to a conqueror (2:17). Here it also anticipates the reference to “white garments” in the promise to the conqueror in the next verse. “Walking” will be found again in 16:15.

- “Thus” in 3:5 shows that the conqueror is understood in terms of the previous verse.
 - The conqueror is given three promises.
 - First, he will be clothed in “white garments” (cf. 1 Enoch 108:12–15). “White garments” will be mentioned again in 3:18 and 4:4 (cf. 7:9, 13; 19:14).
 - Second, his name will not be blotted out of “the book of life.” The “book of life” will play an important role in this book. The concept of “the book of life [or the living]” was common in Judaism at this time (e.g., Ps 69:28; Jubilees 30:22; 1 Enoch 47:3; 108:3; 4Q504 6.14–15; cf. Dan 12:1; Mal 3:16; 1QM 12.2–3; Luke 10:20; Phil 4:3; cf. Mal 3:16–18). The threat of being blotted out of God’s “book” can be traced all the way back to Exod 32:32–33 (cf. Ps 69:28; Jubilees 30:22; 1 Enoch 108:3). Over against this notion is the emphatic “will not” in 3:5. The conquerors’ names are indelibly written in the book of life (cf. 21:27; Joseph and Aseneth 15:4); the names of others are simply not to be found there (13:8; 17:8; 20:15).
 - Third, Jesus “will confess his name before my Father and before his angels” (cf. Matt 10:32; Luke 12:8).