

5 SARDIS WAS SPIRITUALLY DEAD, 3:1-6.

Destiny: Sardis, capital of Lydia. Located high on a rocky hill. The inhabitants thought that they were impregnable, so that they did not stay alert to possible attack.

Description of the Glorious Lamb -- highlights the need for reviving the unseen spiritual life.

- 7 spirits ==> refers to the Holy Spirit (see 1:4; 5:6)

- 7 stars ==> angels of each church.

A. This church was spiritually dead, 3:1b.

1. The church was spiritually alive in name only -- a reputation that their church was a vital, living work for Christ.
2. Jesus says, "Really you are dead spiritually."

B. To have true spiritual life, wake up and repent, 3:2-3. Sardis was self-deceived.

1. Wake up and strengthen what remains.

2. Glorified Christ exhorts Sardis to repent, 3:3

- a. Remember, keep, repent. Wake up and be alert to your true spiritual condition.

How do we make sure to stay spiritually alive for Jesus Christ?

- b. God's judgment will spring on them suddenly, "like a thief."

The phrase is similar to the Rapture but this is not a reference to that. Rather, God's discipline of this church will be just as sudden and unexpected.

3. The Lord knows the church as a whole ==> dead, but a few people are untainted, 3:4

- a. Should they reform the rest? Compare Anna and Simeon vs. Sanhedrin. How long should a Christian remain in a dead church is a question only each individual can answer.

C. Sardis received a challenge from the glorified Christ, 3:5-6.

1. Promises to the overcomers, 3:5

- a. They will be clothed in white robes.

Heavenly white robes- 4:4, 6:11, 7:9, 7:13, 9:8 ⇒ symbol of heavenly purity in Christ's presence ⇒ washed clean from every stain of sin (cf. Eph. 5:26-27). This describes the Church in her eventual glory, Rev. 19:7-8, 14.

- b. Their name would not to be erased from the “book of life.”

The "book of life" is not to be confused with the book that is a register of every person who has physical life -- Exodus 32:32-33.

The Lamb's Book of Life

Psalm 69:28

May they be blotted out of the book of life and may they not be recorded with the righteous.

Phil. 4:3

Indeed, true companion, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Rev. 3:5

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.

Rev. 13:8

All who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been **written from the foundation of the world** in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain.

Rev. 17:8

The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and go to destruction. And those who dwell on the earth, whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, will wonder when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will come.

Rev. 20:12

And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.

Rev. 20:15

And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Rev. 21:27

and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Dan. 12:1

Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands *guard* over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued.

Luke 10:20

Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven.

In Rev. 3:5, what is the meaning of not having my name erased?

View #1 - every person who lived has their name written in the book of life. When they reject Christ – it's erased. (cf. Ps. 69:28; Rev. 3:5; weakness: Rev. 13:8)

View #2 - statement is saying that overcomers will not ever have their names removed (such is not possible). (cf. Rev. 13:8; 17:8; Lk. 10:20) weakness: implied—possible

- c. Jesus Christ will confess the name of the overcomer (cf. Matt. 10:32/Lk. 12:8)

2. Challenge to the hearers, 3:6

6 PHILADELPHIA WILL KEEP THE DOORS OPEN AND BE RESCUED BY THE RAPTURE, 3:7-13

Many churches have closed their doors through the centuries. A few have remained open. One special church has had their doors open 1900 years => Philadelphia, in Asia Minor => modern city has a thriving church.

A. The glorified Jesus Christ, His character & authority, kept the doors open, 3:7a

1. Jesus is holy and true.
2. Jesus has the "key of David" -- Isa. 22:22. Key => symbol of authority.

B. Jesus keeps the door open because He knows the church intimately, 3:8-10.

"I know your deeds"

1. People in this church have an open door, for 3 reasons, 3:8.
 - a. They "have a little power" => small church with little impact apart from Christ.
 - b. They are obedient. They guarded truth by living it.
 - c. They didn't deny Christ. They publicly confessed His name.
2. People in the Philadelphian church will triumph over their enemies, 3:9.
 - a. "Synagogue" → Jewish
 - b. "Satan" → deceivers; enemies of cross and of Christ. (Judaizers)
3. People in the Philadelphian church will be rescued in the rapture, 3:10.

Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.

Interpretation of the promise – “I also will keep you from the hour of testing”:

Views:

- 1] Deliverance from the period of testing (Rapture - Pre-tribulationism)

	John 17:15	Revelation 3:10
	“I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil <i>one</i> ”.	“Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that <i>hour</i> which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.”
SAME	“keep from” tribulation (16:33)	“keep from” “testing”
DIFFERENT	Lord prays	Lord promises
	Present evil experiences	Future testing period
	Evil done <u>by</u> the world	Testing done <u>toward</u> the world
	No specific time period	A specific time period – “the hour”

2] Safekeeping through the testing (Post-tribulationists)

This second view that the Church will be kept safe through the Tribulation uses John 17:15 to say church will go through the period of testing (Tribulation only 1 part of it). People who hold this view say that this is not physical protection (cf. martyrs 6:9-11) but spiritual protection by the (1) sealing (7:1 ff – which are all Jews) and (2) flight into the wilderness (12:6 – nation Israel).

But: this fails to observe the verse – Rev. 3:10 is not a promise to be faithful to them through their trial, but a promise to keep them from the hour of testing.

John 17:15 & Rev. 3:10 have differences: (1) In John, the Lord prays that the church be kept from the evil going on in the world around them; In Revelation 3:10, they will be kept from the hour of testing. (2) In Revelation 3:10, the testing is worldwide, including unbelievers; In John, the evil done by the world is a trial for believers.

Summary chart

”It is impossible to conceive of being in the location where something is happening and being exempt from the time of the happening.” (Ryrie, in Townsend article. Bib Sac July – Sept. 1980)

"I will also keep you from the hour of testing" = deliverance from the period of testing call the Tribulation, Daniel's 70th week of 7 years of unprecedented holocaust on the earth.

This promise is to be kept from the time of these judgments (chapters 6-18), by the pre-tribulation rapture of the Church.

- C. The glorious Lamb, Jesus Christ, challenges overcome to hang on to their rewards, 3:11-13.
 1st reward: I will make him a pillar in the temple (figurative).
 2nd reward: I will write on him 3 special names to suggest possession and identification.
 Name of my God
 Name of the city, new Jerusalem
 Christ's new name

LESSON: Are we listening? (cf. 3:13) Let's be sure our church has a lasting witness, or Jesus Christ will shut the doors. How do we keep it open? Keep His Word!

7 LAODICEA WAS LUKEWARM IN THEIR CHRISTIANITY, 3:14-22

Destiny (3:14): Laodicea, 90 miles due East of Ephesus (not far from Hierapolis & Colosse) cf. Col. 2:1 – Paul's struggles for those in Laodicea whom he had never seen (cf. Col. 4:13, 14-16)

Note: Believers were already in Hierapolis & Colosse 30 years before John wrote Revelation (to Laodicea – “next door”)

It is curious that no mention is made of these other churches in the area. Also, in 361 AD a Church Council convened here to decide NT Canon.

Description (3:14):

1. The Amen – the certainty of God's promise → to the very end. (cf. 2 C. 1:20)
2. The Faithful & True Witness – (cf. 1:5; 19:11) trusted Revealer of God & searcher of hearts.
3. Beginning of the creation of God – not first of a series, but priority → the creator (they had the Colossian Letter – cf. Col. 1:15-17)

A. The glorified Lord Jesus knew Laodicea was lukewarm and rich, 3:15-17.

1. They were lukewarm, 3:15-16.

No condemnation of horrible sins mentioned as in previous churches.

- a. God wanted them to be either cold or hot instead of "lukewarm," 3:15.
- b. God responded by saying "I will spit you out of my mouth," 3:16
This is God's great disgust with a church which has compromised their love for Jesus.

(Why did they become lukewarm?)

2. They were rich but spiritually poor, 3:17 (not poor like Smyrna, 2:9)

In AD 60, when the city of Laodicea suffered damage by earthquake, it declined aid from the Imperial Government by saying, "I have grown rich and have need of nothing."

Their condition:

(v. 17) materially wealthy; spiritually bankrupt and they didn't realize it!

5 adjectives with 1 article → 5 aspects of same spiritual condition: wretched, miserable, poor, blind, naked.

- B. The glorified Christ advised Laodicea to recognize their need, 3:18.

"I advise you to buy from Me" ... →

utter need for that what He alone provides

1. He who buys sees his need and stops saying "I have need of nothing."
2. Buy from the Lord – only if recognize that only the Lord has the treasures we need.
3. How can a beggar "buy"??
Answer → Isaiah 5:5 Buy for nothing!

Some suggest these things speak of the need of faith to receive the salvation, which God offers to unbelievers in the church – rather → believers speaking of their own need.

- C. The glorified Christ disciplines the ones He loves in order to restore them to fellowship, 3:19-20.

1. For believers whom He loves, 3:19.
 - a. God's part is to discipline. (cf. Heb. 12:6-10). Discipline that hurts is not a lack of love, but the opposite!

b. The believer's part:

"keep on being zealous" (hot). What would we do if we were spiritually on fire for Jesus Christ and His work on this earth?

"repent" -- change your mind and heart and be on fire for Jesus.

2. For Christians who are out of fellowship with Jesus, 3:20.

2 common problems/mistakes when interpreting:

1] Not salvation, but fellowship

Context is of believers

Dining suggests fellowship

2] Whether door is door of the church or individual's hearts

Language of NT – Christ makes His dwelling in individual hearts (John 14:23; 15:5; Eph. 3:17) and in the body of believers (Mt. 18:20; 1 C. 3:16-17)

Smith → since church as a whole rejected Christ, Jesus Christ appeals to the individual – “if anyone...”

D. The promise to the overcomers, who are true believers in Laodicea, 3:21-22.

Overcomers, believers, will be co-rulers with Christ during the King's earthly reign, headquartered in Jerusalem on David's throne (Rev. 2:26-27; 20:4).

LESSON: In the midst of our abundant financial and material blessings from God, let's not forget Him and become self-sufficient and so leave Christ out. Don't let the comforts of American life make you lukewarm toward God! Have a burning zeal to walk close to Him in total dependence.

The glorified Lord Jesus Christ, the Glorious Lamb, wants us to recognize our own spiritual condition as an individual, and as a corporate body. Am I spiritually alive on the outside but really dead on the inside? Am I actually doing what God says so that He smiles with approval? Have I become a mediocre, wealthy Christian who blends in by sacrificing my fervent zeal for Jesus Christ.