

## **The Last Letters to the Seven Churches**

### **The Last Three**

### **Revelation 3**

The message to the church at *Sardis* (the word means “remnant” ) is in Rev. 3:1-6. Jesus presents Himself as “He that hath the *seven* Spirits of God.” In Revelation 5:6 The Lamb (we know to be a symbolic name of Jesus) is said to have “*seven* horns and *seven* eyes, which are the *seven* Spirits of God...” We believe the key to understanding these words is found in Isaiah 11:1-2. “And there came forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grown out of his roots. (That Branch is no doubt, Christ) “And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.” “Messiah’s spiritual gifts, each an attribute of the Holy Spirit.”

Thus the picture in Revelation is that of Jesus coming to the Church at Sardis in the “seven-fold energy and activities of the Holy Spirit.” It does not mean there are seven Holy Spirits! In Revelation 1:16 we were told that “He had the seven stars in his right hand.” And in Revelation 1:20 that “the seven stars are the messengers of the seven Churches.” And now here again in Revelation 3:1: “He holds the seven stars.”

And as such He *knows* the conditions of this Church. He says: “they have a name”, “they live” but they are “dead. This Church, like the Church of Colosse and Laodicean nearby, had much activity without true spirituality and therefore in His sight, was dead. Such a condition has invaded many a local Church. What would be considered a “dead” Church by some and not by others is of little consequence. It is what Christ thinks that matters. Churches can be alive with much activity *to maintain a good name* without any real spiritual vitality.

Whenever there is reference to Jesus coming as a thief, as in verse 3, it always has reference to His coming in judgment, not in blessing. But as stated in verse 4, in the deadest Church there will always be a godly remnant of those who have genuine spiritual life. Thus the appeal in verse 5 and 6 is directed to individuals within the Churches.

Verse 5 has been the ground on which many have taught a fall-away doctrine of believers. But when we remember who it is that *overcometh*, as stated in 1 John 5:4, such is not the true interpretation. Read 1 John 5:1 “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God...” Then read verse 4 “For whosoever is born of God *overcometh* the world: and this is the victory that *overcometh* the world, even our faith. Then verse 5 “Who is he that *overcometh* the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? So when we come to Revelation 3:5, rather than the verse being a threat of one losing one’s salvation, it becomes a verse of blessed assurance. Christ *will not* blot out the name of the *overcomer* from the Book of Life. He will confess the name of the believer before His Father and before the Angels.

Those who see a prophetic picture in the Church at Sardis, see it as a picture of Protestantism which arose to combat Romanism. So soon, become a name without spiritual life.

The message to the Church at *Philadelphia* is found in Revelation 3:7-13.

Jesus presents Himself as the one who holds the key of David, the One who openeth and no man can shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth.” Claiming the “keys of David” He is not only claiming to be the One promised in Isaiah 22:22, but claiming to be of the Royal seed of David also. To this Church he had opened a door (verse 8). The Church had a *little strength* and had not denied His Name. But there was the danger of missing the opportunities granted by the opened doors. And that danger faces every local church!

Verses 9-11 As stated earlier, there are some verses that demand local interpretation only e.g chapter 2;20 These verses in chapter three ,seem to demand prophetic interpretation only. He will judge the synagogues of Satan. He will keep from the hour of trial that is coming upon the whole world. He will come quickly, that is, suddenly, and when He does He will be giving “crowns”, which as we have stated, always represent rewards. These things are certainly in the future. No rewards will be given until He comes. Revelation 22:12. And the Scriptures clearly teach that judgments and rewards will only be given when the Lord comes. 1 Corinthians 4:5. Again, the overcomer is promised rewards. What all is involved we do not fully understand. But the name of God will be on him and the name of the city of God, which is the New Jerusalem will be on him as well as the new name promised in chapter 2:17. Some things we will only be able to understand when they are fulfilled.

The chapter concludes with the message to *Laodicea*. Verses 14-22.

Jesus introduces Himself as “The Amen, the faithful and true witness.” The same title as given in Revelation 1:5. His witness will be trustworthy. It will be the exact truth and nothing but the truth. His all-seeing eyes will have recorded exactly what has been the case! “The beginning of the creation of God” these words have been used by J.W.’s to prove that Jesus was the first created being. But that is not the meaning at all. Elsewhere, He has been presented as the *beginner* of Creation, and that is the meaning here. He describes the condition of the Church as being neither hot nor cold, lukewarm. A condition unacceptable to Him. And as He goes on to describe the condition, we can see that this Church had become useless to Him. The Church felt that it was “rich, increased with goods and in need of *nothing*.” But this was the condition in their eyes. In His eyes, it was “wretched, miserable, poor and blind and naked.” What men see and what He sees are two different things! All of the things listed in verse 18 have to do with the practical righteousnesses of saints (Revelation 19:8) without which a local Church will soon become useless to the Lord. It is *because* He loves His people He rebukes and chastens verse 19. And calls for repentance. And until there is repentance at Laodicia, He stands outside the door knocking to enter. Once again the message closes with a promise , to the one who has ears to hear. They will sit with Him in His throne. It is interesting to note the future tense in verse 21 Jesus is not on His throne yet, He sits with the Father in the Father’s throne today.