

Revelation 3:1-6

1 "And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars: "I know your works; you have a name of being alive, but you are dead. 2 Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is on the point of death, for I have not found your works perfect in the sight of my God. 3 Remember then what you received and heard; obey it, and repent. 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 Yet you have still a few persons in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes; they will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy. 5 If you conquer, you will be clothed like them in white robes, and I will not blot your name out of the book of life; I will confess your name before my Father and before his angels. 6 Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches (NRSV).

In Revelation chapter one the word of God flows from Jesus Christ to an angel, from the angel to John, from John to seven churches in Asia, and from them to the Bible. Blessed are the readers, hearers, and those who keep the word. It is extremely important to know the word and keep the word. I find it interesting that a lot of people like Revelation but fail to recognize that the message is to the church and resembles contemporary society.

John is on the island Patmos, a remote island in the subject to Rome and under the threat of persecution. Some people teach that the Apostle John is the author. However, that is disputed by most scholars for valid reasons. The author does not identify himself as the Apostle and the writing style is completely different from the Apostle. Personally I like to keep an open mind that maybe it is and maybe it is not. It does not matter to me, what matter is that it is in the Bible, the quotes are from Jesus, and the word remains current within contemporary society.

The book starts with a blessing. The people that read the Bible are blessed. The desire to study the Bible is self-perpetuating. It feeds upon self like a fire; the hotter it gets, the better it burns, and the better it burns, the hotter it gets. The more you read and study of the Bible, the more you enjoy reading it and the more you want to know. The people in worship are blessed. Again, I strongly encourage you to check what you hear with what the Bible actually says. Blessed are those who keep the word. This is extremely important. This is why the book was written, the churches slipped away from keeping the word because the people slipped away from keeping the word. America today is slipping away and God knows who is fake and who is sincere. You can't love God and hate the things that God loves and you can't love God and love the things that God hates.

Each church of Revelation had a problem covered in chapters two and three. In Ephesus the Lord knows they are good. They have worked hard, persevered, do not tolerate wicked, and test false apostles. They have endured hardships for the Lord but the problem is that they have forsaken their first love. In other words, they have lost their passion. Their love and enthusiasm are gone. In Smyrna, the problem is spiritual poverty, affliction, and slander. People claim to have faith but do not. In Pergamum, the problem is that only some remain true to the Lord while the others are practicing idolatry, paganism, and sexual immorality. In Thyatira, the threat is from inside the church. Jesus

knows their love, faith, service, and perseverance. The problem is Jezebel, a self-proclaimed prophetess that misleads the church into sexual immorality and idol worship. The woman is an evil influence on the life of the church. In Sardis Jesus knows their reputation is that they are alive but they are dead. Jesus commands them to wake up and strengthen what remains. Their deeds are not complete in the sight of God. They were spiritually dead and cautioned to remember the word, obey it, and repent. The church in Philadelphia gets a good report. It is the only one of the seven that Jesus has nothing negative to say about them. They have kept the word and endured patiently. The only problem is that they have little strength. The church in Laodicea is neither hot nor cold, it is plagued with complacency. This is the only one of the seven church of Revelation that the Lord has nothing good to say.

The lessons to the churches of Revelation are powerful and like other biblical passages, the word remains current today. In studying Revelation we tend to focus the end of times and look for clues hidden within the prophecy. But we fail to realize that each church claims righteousness and fails the Lord without repentance, which is the leading cause of the end times. The overall lesson for all churches and individuals is if you do not take religion seriously, it is offensive to Christ. It is churches that identify as Christian, pledge loyalty to the Lord and his word, and claim to be saved that fail the Lord. Jesus condemns the indifference. They think they have money and don't need anything but they do not care about the Lord's mission. Christ labels them as wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked. I think it is important to cover each of the seven churches in detail to learn the Lord's perspective on the different church problems.

The message is to the churches from the Risen Savior who says "I know you and your reputation. They are churches. This means they are meeting on a regular basis, with an offering, worship, and praise. They are doing what churches do. Yet, they face the Lord's condemnation. The Lord emphasizes whoever has an ear let them hear. In other words, you have to pay attention to what the Lord says. Everyone needs to reflect, repent, and serve. When you look at what the Lord says, look at yourself and determine to do God's will. Christ knows and sees what you do, so you need to look at your own life and dedication. Look at your church and look at yourself and imagine how the Lord may be looking at you. He knows who you are and what you do.