



when CHRIST
returns

— REVELATION 1-5 —

Review: The Revelation of Jesus describes Christ as He is now!

- not Christ emptied of His heavenly attributes and humbled in His humanity.
- Rather: Jesus fully clothed in His heavenly glory ... as He was, as He is, and as He will always be!

1. What is the Revelation? (chapter 1, verses 1-2)

- “*a revelation of Jesus Christ*”
 - *apocalypsis* (Gk) - unveiling, disclosure.
- the curtain has been pulled back, and we are looking into what is happening in the spiritual world ... what is really happening:
 - the King is on the move ... **so pay attention!**
 - the King holds the keys of death & Hades ... **so do not be afraid!**
 - Jesus is the King of Kings ... **so worship Him!**

The First Vision: (1:19 – 3:22) – Jesus, the Risen Lord, speaks to the 7 Churches of Asia.

- His message to each congregation follows a general pattern.

The Lord praises them:

- He sees their goodness and effort, and encourages them as they live in difficult times.

The Lord rebukes and corrects them:

- He knows where they are vulnerable, and that corrective measures must be taken to ensure their health & vitality.

The Lord warns them:

- He reminds them that because He holds the keys of death & Hades, He also decides the consequences of their attitudes & behavior ... so pay attention!

The Lord promises them:

- To those who do pay attention and are faithful, the King assures them of His love, care, attention and resources ... forever.

Review of the Seven Churches so far. (Revelation 2)

- **Ephesus:** the heart. *“Remember your first love.”*
- **Smyrna:** the body. *“Continue to stand firm. I am with you.”*
- **Pergamum:** the mind. *“You tolerate false teaching.”*
- **Thyatira:** the wallet. *“You permit false teaching.”*

This Week: The Church Congregation of Sardis. (Revelation 3:1-6)

3 *“Write this letter to the angel of the church in Sardis. This is the message from the one who has the sevenfold Spirit of God and the seven stars:*

The City of Sardis:

- Historically rivalled Pergamum as the greatest city in Asia.
 - ancient city - founded over 1200 years before Christ.
 - gold and silver mines.
 - former Asia capital of King of Lydia, and later Cyrus, King of Persia.
 - 100,000 pop. ... now perhaps 60,000.
 - 50 km south of Thyatira ... another trade route and gateway into W. Asia.
 - head of a fertile & beautiful valley.
 - old military fortress – 500 metres above valley & nearly impregnable.
 - commanded trade of Aegean region because of its strategic location.
 - Roman baths and gymnasium complex.

The City of Sardis:

- Historically rivalled Pergamum as the greatest city in Asia.
- BUT ... a city that was not as it appeared to be.
 - its glory was fading – eclipsed by Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum.
 - it had been destroyed by an earthquake (A.D. 17), and had lost much of its history and prominence.
 - was granted 5 years of tax exemption to rebuild itself.
 - lost out on a new temple (Pergamum) to the Emperor in 26 AD.
- Sadly, Sardis was relying on its former glory, not its present circumstances.
 - like a fading athlete, it would never again be what it once was.

The City of Sardis:

- Historically rivalled Pergamum as the greatest city in Asia.
- BUT ... a city that was not as it appeared to be.
- Sadly, Sardis was relying on its former glory, not its present circumstances.

The Church of Sardis:

- rivalled Ephesus as the greatest congregation in Asia.
- a large, active church with a tremendous reputation.
- a wealthy congregation, in a wealthy city.

3 *“Write this letter to the angel of the church in Sardis. This is the message from the one*

- *who has the sevenfold Spirit of God*
 - Rev 1:4 – the Spirit of God – the Holy Spirit!
- *and who has the seven stars.*
 - the angels under His authority.

The Lord' Praise & Commendation:

- _____
- Uh oh! ...

The Lord' Praise & Commendation:

- nothing

The Lord' Rebuke: (v.v. 1-2)

1. *"I know all the things you do, that you have a reputation for being alive—but you are dead."*

Note – the congregation of Sardis:

- has no false teaching to correct.
- has no sexual immorality to confront.
- has no rebellion, scandals, conflict or division to report.
- has no persecution from Rome to be noted.

Truth: Reputations are not important to God ... Reality is.

... and the reality is that the congregation of Sardis are in serious trouble, because in the King's eyes they are spiritually dead.

The Lord' Praise & Commendation:

- nothing

The Lord' Rebuke: (v.v. 1-2)

1. *"I know all the things you do, that you have a reputation for being alive—but you are dead."*
2. *"I find that your actions do not meet the requirements of my God."*
 - ***pepleromena*** (Gk) - not fulfilled; incomplete; .
literally: *"I find your activity incomplete in the sight of my God."*

Three Possible Explanations: (Johnson)

- a. Perhaps Sardis Church was beginning many new ministries, but finishing very few of them.
 - *“I find your activity incomplete in the sight of my God – you never finish what you begin.”*
- b. Perhaps Sardis Church had forgotten why they were busy.
 - *“I find your activity incomplete in the sight of my God – you have forgotten why you are doing what you are doing, and for whom you are doing it.”*
- c. Perhaps Sardis Church had forgotten their primary mission – to proclaim Jesus, baptize converts and teach them what the Lord had commanded.
 - *“I find your activity incomplete in the sight of my God – the good deeds you are doing are no longer shedding light on who I am and what I’ve done.”*

Three Questions That Must Be Answered:

1. What does it mean to be “alive” in Christ?

a. Life with Jesus is a relationship, not a religion.

- it’s the relationship I have with Jesus, and He with me, that creates within me new life.
- I cannot walk with Him apart from Him.

⁴ Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me.

⁵ “I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers.

Jesus – John 15

Three Questions That Must Be Answered:

1. What does it mean to be “alive” in Christ?
 - a. Life with Jesus is a relationship, not a religion.
 - b. Life with Jesus is supernatural.
 - I must be “born again”.
 - I must be filled with the Spirit’s power.

⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Jesus – Acts 1

29 ... “O Lord, give us, your servants, great boldness in preaching your word.

30 Stretch out your hand with healing power; may miraculous signs and wonders be done through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”

31 After this prayer, the meeting place shook, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Then they preached the word of God with boldness ... 33 with great power Peter, John and others continued to give witness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and much grace was upon them.

The Early Church - Acts 4

2 When I first came to you, dear brothers and sisters, I didn't use lofty words and impressive wisdom to tell you God's secret plan ... 3 I came to you in weakness—timid and trembling. 4 And my message and my preaching were very plain. Rather than using clever and persuasive speeches, I relied only on the power of the Holy Spirit. 5 I did this so you would trust not in human wisdom but in the power of God.

Paul – 1 Corinthians 5

Once individual disciples and congregations no longer live in the power of Jesus' Spirit, the forms may remain, but the inner reality will be gone. And we find ourselves attempting for God what only our human resources allow.

We no longer push ourselves out into the deep water where we are beyond our own resources, and we settle for being comfortable and safe.

Johnson



*Wind of the Spirit, fill the sails of my soul;
Send us on, Lord. Let your wind blow.*

Russ Rosen

Three Questions That Must Be Answered:

1. What does it mean to be “alive” in Christ?
2. How do I live full of the Spirit? (v.v. 2-3)

The Lord Jesus gives Sardis Church five urgent commands:

a. ***“Wake up!”***

... pay attention!

Three Questions That Must Be Answered:

1. What does it mean to be “alive” in Christ?
2. How do I live full of the Spirit? (v.v. 2-3)

The King gives Sardis Church five urgent commands:

a. “*Wake up!*” ... pay attention!

b. “***Strengthen what remains.***”

- fill what you have with the Spirit’s power.

Three Questions That Must Be Answered:

1. What does it mean to be “alive” in Christ?
2. How do we live full of the Spirit? (v.v. 2-3)

The King gives Sardis Church five urgent commands:

- a. “*Wake up!*” ... pay attention!
- b. “*Strengthen what remains.*”
- c. “***Go back to what you heard and believed at first.***”
 - the gospel that freed you from your chains.
 - the Spirit that supernaturally filled you with the victorious power of Jesus Christ.
 - the first love you had for the Lord.

Three Questions That Must Be Answered:

1. What does it mean to be “alive” in Christ?
2. How do I live full of the Spirit? (v.v. 2-3)

The King gives Sardis Church five urgent commands:

- a. “*Wake up!*” ... pay attention!
- b. “*Strengthen what remains.*”
- c. “*Go back to what you heard and believed at first.*”
- d. “***Hold to this firmly.***”
 - don’t let go of the truth and quench the Holy Spirit.

Three Questions That Must Be Answered:

1. What does it mean to be “alive” in Christ?
2. How do I live full of the Spirit? (v.v. 2-3)

The King gives Sardis Church five urgent commands:

- a. “*Wake up!*” ... pay attention!
- b. “*Strengthen what remains.*”
- c. “*Go back to what you heard and believed at first.*”
- d. “*Hold to this firmly.*”
- e. “***Repent, and turn to me again!***”
 - correct your course and carry on in your journey with Jesus.

Three Questions That Must Be Answered:

1. What does it mean to be “alive” in Christ?
2. How do I live full of the Spirit? (v.v. 2-3)
3. How can I know when I am filled with the Spirit?
 - a. I have a deep desire to read the Bible.
 - b. My prayer life is not a list ... but a listening session.
 - c. The nagging habits of my old life really bother me.
 - d. Telling others about Jesus becomes natural.
 - e. I am aware of God’s abundance, and share it with others.
 - *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.*

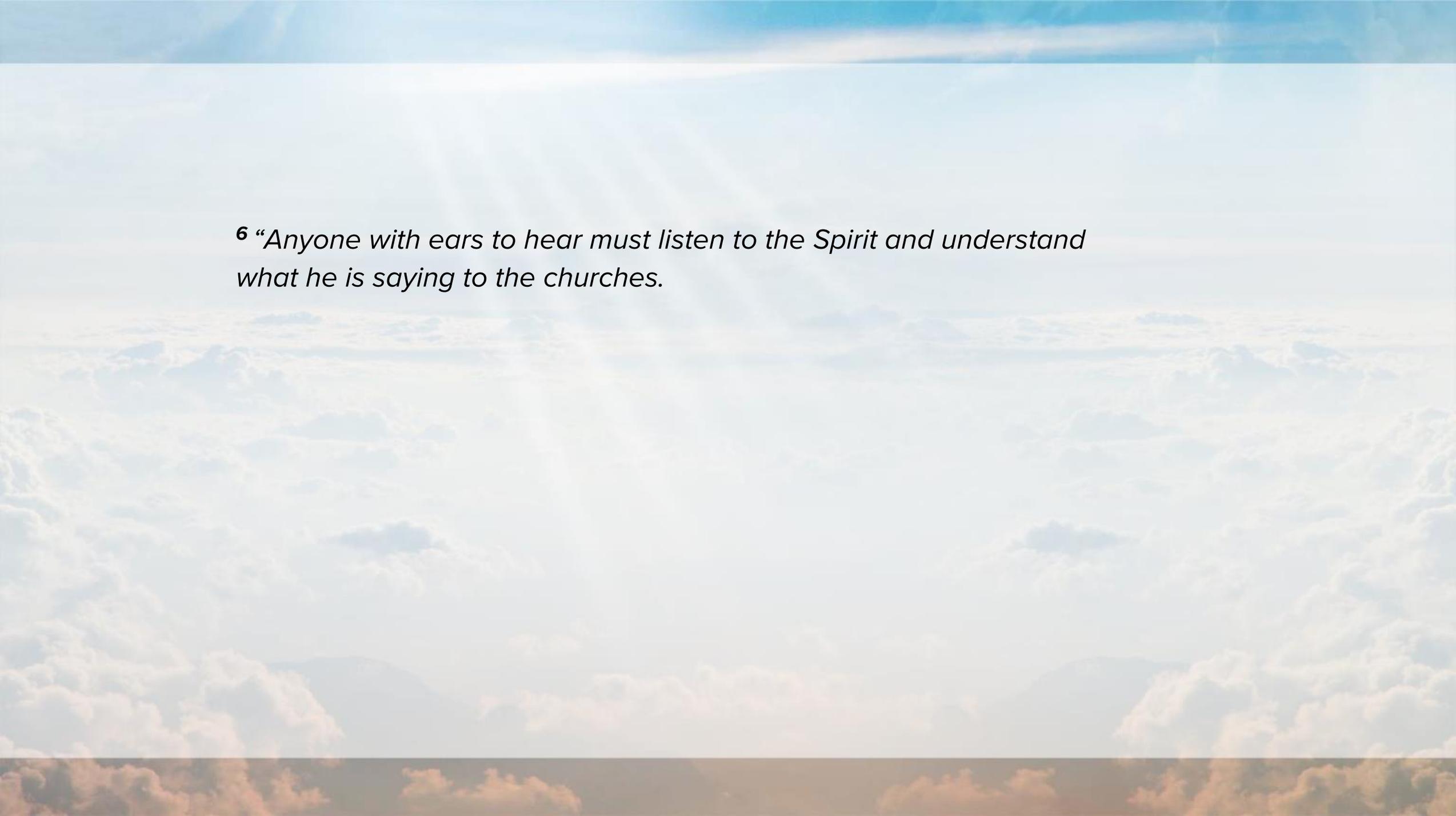
The Lord's Warning: (v. 3)

If you don't wake up, I will come to you suddenly, as unexpected as a thief.

The Lord's promise: (v. 4)

⁴ "Yet there are some in the church in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes with evil.

- They will walk with me in white, for they are worthy.*
- ⁵ All who are victorious will be clothed in white.*
- I will never erase their names from the Book of Life, but I will announce before my Father and his angels that they are mine.*



⁶ “Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches.