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THE CHURCHES OF THYATIRA AND SARDIS

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION
REVELATION 2:24-3:6
NUMBER 5

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REVELATION 2:24-3:6 "But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. But that which ye have already hold fast till I come. And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. "And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

Now we come to some encouragement to the church at Thyatira. "Unto you" is dative of advantage, and it means it is to their advantage to keep this doctrine. "The rest" refers to the born-again people in the Thyatiran Church. Because the Jezebel principles had infiltrated into the church there were many members who were not born-again. Remember, this is a characteristic that will be seen in the entire Church Age. Every local church will have a certain percent of the people in the membership who are not born-again. So "The rest" refers to the born-again minority. "This doctrine of Jezebel" refers to the doctrine of immorality which had swept away many. "The depths of Satan" is a doctrine which is more clearly outlined in 1 TIMOTHY 4:1-3 "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth."

"In the latter times" refers to the Church Age. So Paul here in 1 Timothy outlines these deep things of Satan. Speaking lies in hypocrisy simply refers to false spirituality. This is spirituality by works and emotion and by certain kinds of experiences like false dedication and superficial commitment to Christ. "Having their conscience seared with a hot iron" simply refers to a guilt complex. This is a form of worry and lack of trust in God. Marriage is a divine institution and God commanded man to marry and multiply. Marriage is a divine institution and in the will of God. So the believer cannot be demon possessed but he can be influenced by demons, so the doctrine of demons is an insult to the plan of God.

Now back to REVELATION 2:24 "But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden." "As they speak" anticipates the modern tongues movement. Tongues in the Bible is a translation of the Greek word "Glossa" and always refers to another language. Where the word "unknown" appears in your Bible it is in italics and this means it is not in the original. There is no such thing as an unknown tongue. Isaiah 8 and 28 speaks of a demon that controls the vocal cords.

REVELATION 2:25 "But that which ye have already hold fast till I come." This refers to believers with true doctrine. "That which you have" is present linear action and means you have it now and you will keep on having it. These people are not influenced by false doctrine.

"Hold fast" is an aorist, active, imperative and means for them to continue to hold fast until the end and until the Second Coming of Christ. This is a command to church members for them to keep on holding on to doctrine. The power of the church is Bible doctrine. You have to understand doctrine and live by doctrine if you expect to have real power in the church.

REVELATION 2:26 "And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations" This is assurance to this local church.

"He that overcometh" is a reference to all believers. This is a present, active, participle in the dative case and it refers to the fact that when you enter the plan of God, you are a victor immediately. In the plan of God you are "In Christ" and he is the victor. There is no such thing as a victorious Christian apart from Christ. Christ is the victorious one. "Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ". We can't live a victorious life except as Christ lives in us. He is the victor. He lived a perfect life and died a perfect death and rose again and ascended and sat down at the right hand of God. He is the victorious one and we partake of his victory. His victory becomes our victory. But so many times we think of doing something wonderful and we call it victory--but he is the victorious one and our victory, if we have one, is through him. So our part is to partake of his victory. It is not what we do, but it is what he has already done.

1 John 5:4-5 reminds us that the victorious one is the one who believes in Jesus Christ. We are overcomers because we believe in the Son of God. Every Christian makes many mistakes and falls and then falls again, but then our perfect victory comes to us because that victory is in him. We are going to get a resurrection body and a perfect home not because we deserve it, but because of who and what Christ is. I am not encouraging you to be a sloppy believer. (Many of you will do that without any encouragement from me.) But if you know the Word of God and apply it to daily living you will stay in line. The Word of God will liberate you. Know the Word then live as you please, if you know what I mean. Live your own life as unto the Lord.

"Keepeth my works" is a present, active, participle and means you keep something that belongs to you. This is where we get the principle of spirituality. The old sin nature produces human good and the Holy Spirit produces divine good. You do divine good when you are under the control of the Holy Spirit, but you produce human good when you are under the control of the old sin nature. If the Holy Spirit controls your life your work adds up to divine good. But if the old sin nature controls your life your work adds up to human good. "My works" refers to divine good. So both in salvation and in service the issue is the same--divine good versus human good. TITUS 3:5 "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost"

So it is the work of Christ and not our work. Our work is keeping the ten commandments, standing on our own good deeds, believing in works and baptism to help save us. "Unto the end" refers to the end of the believer's life.

"To him will I give power over the nations" refers to the ultimate power Christ will give to those who will rule and reign with him not just for 1,000 years, but for all eternity. Revelation 19:15 says exactly the same thing.

REVELATION 2:27 "And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father."

How is the believer going to rule? Until Christ returns and perfect environment is established in the earth, it is necessary for man to live by law and order. The "Rod of iron" refers to capital punishment. Crime can only be controlled by maximum punishment. If you outlaw guns then men will find other instruments with which they can kill. As long as the old sin nature abides, it will be necessary to have capital punishment. If you take guns out of the hands of the law abiding citizens, then you just make it easier for the criminals. Genesis 9:6 and Romans 13:4 both back up capital punishment. Maximum crime must be controlled by maximum punishment. "Shall be broken" refers to those who step out of line. They will be broken with maximum punishment. Christ received these things from God the Father and he is just passing it on to us.

REVELATION 2:28 "And I will give him the morning star." "The morning star" refers to occupation with Christ in eternity. This is about as close as the Bible can come to describing fantastic happiness for those who will rule and reign with Christ for eternity. Jesus Christ will provide a type of happiness unknown to us today.

REVELATION 2:29 "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." This is assurance for us as we live out our days, living through time. Having ears is not enough, we must allow his Spirit to teach us then we can hear and understand doctrine.

"He that hath" is present active participle and means since we have ears let us always hear. But "Let him hear" is an aorist, active, imperative and means every time a Bible class is taught, you be there and hear so you can learn and apply doctrine to your experience. The Holy Spirit is the teacher of the church.

Chapter 3:1-6 The Fifth Church--Sardis

The angel is the messenger, the pastor of the church in Sardis.

Sardis was the capital of Lydia. Their last king was Croesus, the wealthiest man in the world. He invented coinage. Sardis was a textile center. There were great temples of pleasure in Sardis. It was conquered by Cyrus the Great and Alexander the Great and Antiochus the Great. So Sardis might boast that they were no longer great, but they had been conquered by the "Greats". A great earthquake destroyed the whole city in 17 A.D. and then it was rebuilt.

"The seven spirits of God" simply speaks of the perfect Spirit of God. Zechariah 3:9 and 4:10 and Revelation 4:5 and 5:6-7 and 1 Peter 3:12 we have this same phrase. He is not only true humanity but he is undiminished Deity. He is the unique person of the universe. He holds the seven stars in his hand. This is a picture of Christ holding the pastors in his hand.

Now we come to Christ's appraisal of this church in Sardis. Christ knew them through and through. They had a name that they were alive, but they were really dead. This lets you know exactly what kind of a reputation they had. Name means reputation. They had a reputation for being a spiritual great. They really did things that brought great excitement to the city and nation. Yet they were dead. Sardis was a church where the members had hoodwinked the rest of the citizens. They were sweet and friendly and they "oozed" sweetness. But they were out of fellowship. They impressed people but they didn't impress God. There is no substitute for the filling of the Holy Spirit. So they had the appearance of life, but they were dead. This idea appears in Romans 8:6, Romans 8:13, Revelation 3:1, 1 Timothy 5:6, and Luke 15:24 and 32.

REVELATION 3:2-3 - An exhortation "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee."

"Be watchful" means to become watchful. This is an exhortation to rebound and get back in fellowship. It is a present, middle, imperative and means they will be benefited by becoming watchful. Get on the beam and stay on the beam. Get back in the bottom circle of fellowship and stay there. Use 1 John 1:9 every day if necessary. This really separates the sheep and the goats in Christ's kingdom.

"Strengthen the things which remain" means that they are to stabilize their church by learning doctrine. They were to get back in fellowship and with the time they had left they were to learn doctrine. They were to use the great rebound Psalms like Psalm 32 and 38 and 51. The great believers are not those who never fail, but are those who, when they fail, they rebound and get up and move on. Each person must take the responsibility for his own sins and his own actions. We are not to blame others.

"That are ready to die" refers to those who are losing their Christian influence and happiness because they are constantly out of fellowship.

"I have not found thy works perfect before God" is another way of saying that the people in this church were out of fellowship and they were trying to accomplish things in the strength of their own ability. When you perform in the power of the Spirit even if it is just giving a cup of cold water, then it counts. Perfect work is divine good and this can only be accomplished when one is in fellowship and under the control of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is perfect and divine good is perfect.

REVELATION 3:3 "Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." You heard it in the past, now use what you have heard. Hold fast and repent, change your mental attitude.

"If thou therefore shalt not watch" is a third class condition and means maybe you will and maybe you won't. If they would not repent then he will come to them with some quick discipline.

REVELATION 3:4 "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy." This verse is addressed to those believers in Sardis who really live under the control of the Spirit. Walking with Christ in white refers to their production. They are worthy not because of who and what they are but because of their Spirit filled life.

REVELATION 3:5 "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels." Now we have some assurance to the church in Sardis. "Clothed in white raiment" refers to positional truth. It means some had been saved and they had eternal life and it could never be taken away from them. They were saved and they had the perfect righteousness of Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:21 refers to this idea in these words--"That we might be made the righteousness of God in him".

Later on we are to study the books and here he says, "I will not blot their names out of the book of life". We will study the Book of Life in detail when we get to it in Revelation 20. It is the book which contains every name of every member of the human race.

Christ here says he will confess the name of the believer before his Father. This confess is "Homologeō" and means to name, to state the name. It is exactly the same word used in 1 John 1:9 where we are told to name, or state our sins to God and he forgives them.

Then why does it say he is going to state your name before the angels? Because of the angelic conflict. This proves to the fallen angels that they deserve what is coming to them. God just wants to show them that he is always fair.