**THE 7 CHURCHES OF REVELATION**

**Sardis, Revelation 3:1-6**

Sunday, July 23, 2023

**WE Slide 1 If you had to guess, what would you think are the percentages of unbelievers, true believers, and those you’re not sure are believers in a gospel focused church?** In GP? **Hold off until I ask for Slide 2 From my years around churches here’s what I think…**

1. 10% +/- Unbelievers- attend church for sake of spouse/children, might admit to going to church but would probably deny believing any of it if questioned by other unbelievers, life decisions/relationships motivated by self/how they think.
2. 25% +/- True Believers- by their life choices you have a good confidence- attend church to worship/learn/serve others, admit going to church, want others to know Jesus, life decisions/relationships motivated by God’s Word/commands.
3. 65% +/- Believers?- say they are Christians, attend church/might serve, admit to going to church, may/may not admit to believing stuff or wanting others to know Jesus, life decisions/relationships primarily motivated by self/society.

**In other words, it’s hard to know based on their life outside of church; we don’t know their hearts, but Jesus does and only His opinion matters.** In our series on the 7 Churches/Revelation we’ve learned that only He truly knows a person’s mind/heart and we’ll be reminded today that only He knows for sure who’s a believer because He’s the one who gives the spiritual life necessary for a person to be a true believer.

**TODAY:** **Slide 3 Jesus lets another church know, the church at Sardis, that He knows where they stand with Him- He knows they are spiritually dead. How can a group of people known by others to be a church, Christians, be spiritually dead?** Let’s see what Jesus says. **READ Revelation 3:1-6 Slide 4-10 Here’s a pie chart of the Church at Sardis.** It’s the 1st Zombie Church of Sardis- the church of the walking dead.How can Jesus call these people spiritually dead? **Slide 11 Because He’s the one who “has the 7 Spirits of God”. 7 Spirits?!** What’s that mean?

**GOD**

1. **DESCRIPTION OF JESUS, Revelation 3:1a**
2. **Has the Seven Spirits of God-** Only 1 Holy Spirit so this must be figurative.
3. 7 in OT/NT is symbolic for completeness/perfection.
4. Referring to the fullness/completeness/perfection of God the Holy Spirit.
5. People might be able to fool other people when it comes to being a believer, they may even fool themselves by believing they’re good to go based on them being good people.
6. But Jesus is the One who gives spiritual life through giving us God the Holy Spirit so obviously He knows who’s a true believer, who’s not, and who’s playing a game.

**He also says He has the 7 stars… Slide 12**

1. **Has the Seven Stars**- Revelation 1:20- stars are the churches’ angels/pastors
2. The pastors answer to Jesus for the life of the church, they need to step up/be leaders Jesus called.
3. The temptation is to be people-pleasers, but we’re to be God-pleasers, **READ Slide 13** 1 Thess. 2:4

**Jason/I are committed to pleasing God.** We’re aware we’re not perfect, but our motivation is always to please God, to challenge/encourage/help you to grow, but that might mean we’ll not always be your favorite people. **But we don’t want Jesus to describe GP as He described Sardis- Slide 14 a church with the reputation for being Christ-followers, but were actually not, they were spiritually dead.**

1. **DESCRIPTION OF THE CHURCH, Revelation 3:1b**
2. **Name/alive-** onoma- reputation/zao- spiritual life; known in Sardis as people who worshiped Jesus.
3. **Dead-** nekros; morally or spiritually deficient, spiritually dead, no Holy Spirit, no spiritual power/impact.
4. Doing churchy/religious things but they’re spiritually dead. **Similar to Matthew 23:27-28** **READ Slide 15-17**
5. Not believers acting like unbelievers- they’re unbelievers acting like believers.
6. **Jesus’ evaluation-** “Your deeds (religious activity) not completed in the sight of God”, not empowered by God therefore not approved by Him, 3:2

**They’re doing all this church stuff that they think is good/others would consider religious, but Jesus considers it worthless- they’re not even believers.** So, Jesus warns the FEW TRUE BELIEVERS left that if they didn’t WAKE UP and get their act together He would have to judge the church. **Slide 18 They needed to- Wake Up!, Strengthen, Remember, Keep, Repent.** **You want life breathed back into your life, your church activity, bring your church back from the dead?** GP, do you want to make sure our church continues to be alive, effective, growing? **Commit to do these 5 commands in your life/service. Slide 19**

1. **COMMANDS FROM JESUS, Revelation 3:2-3**
2. **Wake Up!-** ginomai gregoreuo; present imperative, be continually watching/refers to mental awareness.
3. A lifestyle of alertness- wake up/remain awake, be aware of what’s happening around you.
4. Sardis- undefeatable fortress city, was destroyed 2x as their soldiers slept.
5. The few believers remaining had fallen asleep and allowed religious unbelievers to lead the church.

**I’m so thankful for those who lead our church who are awake and continually praying, evaluating, and making the changes necessary so our activities are God-empowered and spiritually impactful!** Once awake they needed to “strengthen the things that remained”. **Slide 20**

1. **Strengthen the Things that Remain/About to Die-** aorist imperative- urgency, must happen now
2. Strenghen- sterizo; inwardly firm/committed, reestablish the things that remain
3. “things…remain”- loipos; part of a whole that remains. **What are the things that remain?**
4. The part of this church that remains is the few believers, those holding to the gospel/mission.
5. “about to die”- There was a spiritual pulse but it was weak, they were close to death.
6. These believers needed to come together, empowered by the Holy Spirit/support each other, take the leadership and allow spiritual life to be infused into their activities.

**Once awake/aware, committed to Christ/each other they needed to REMEMBER what they heard/received. Slide 21**

1. **Remember What You Have Heard/Received-** mnemoneuo; present imperative; keep going back to
2. Received- lambano; gospel, Great Commission, Great Command- love God, love others.
3. Heard- akouo; OT, Gospels, Apostles’ letters, teaching. What we have today in one unified book.
4. Go back to that day you received the gospel, mission, teaching.
5. **Will you be upset if I once again remind us of what those things are- the 4 things all believers are commanded by God to do in their lives? Slide 22**

**Each of these 5 COMMANDS build on the other- can’t have one without the other.** Once they’ve gone back to the mission and teaching Jesus/apostles have given them they need to “KEEP IT”- OBEY! **Slide 23**

1. **Keep it-** tereo; present imperative; continually obey, observe, the things you’ve heard/received
2. Don’t just remember and talk about the mission/teaching- DO THEM!
3. Don’t just remember the good ‘ol days, DO WHAT YOU DID during the good ‘ol days for the same reasons you did them- for Jesus.
4. Day in/day out, no matter the circumstances, how you feel, what others do…

**All of this starts with a heart of REPENTANCE- the decision to stop doing what they were doing, which was a lot of nothing, and start doing what Jesus told them to do. Slide 24**

1. **Repent- metanoeo; aorist imperative; feel remorse and change how you think/respond.**
2. Repent- metanoeo; feel remorse, change in thought/response
3. Believers repent for being asleep, failing to stay faithful, and allowing unbelievers to take leadership.

**Just in case they missed how serious Jesus was He WARNS them that failure to obey will cause Him to come to their church like a thief. Slide 25** Failure will bring His judgment- that’s what “thief” is referring to.

1. **WARNING FROM JESUS- Jesus Will Come Like a Thief**
2. **Thief- kleptes;** speaks to an unexpected coming destruction/loss/judgement not the rapture
3. **“will not know…hour”-** result of not obeying commands, they would have remained asleep
4. **Probably Refers to the End of the Church in Sardis.**

**Again, Jesus tries to motivate them to obedience by telling the true believes what awaits them in the eternal state.** Their eternity was secure through faith in Christ so they needed to focus on faithfully living for Him now. **Slide 26**

1. **PROMISES FROM JESUS TO OVERCOMERS, Revelation 3:4-5**
2. **Will Be Clothed in White Garments-** symbolizes being clothed in Christ’s righteousness.
3. **Slide 27 Name Will Not Be Erased from the Book of Life-** The name would never been removed because they are truly saved and have shown it through their obedience throughout their life.
4. **Slide 28 Jesus Will Confess the Overcomer’s Name before God and His angels.**
5. True believers/overcomers admit being followers of Jesus and encourage others to accept Him. **How do I know that? Because of what Jesus said in Matthew 10:32. Slide 29**

**John wrote this letter in 95 A.D. 5 years before the beginning of the 2nd century.** History tells us that the few believers at Sardis must not have WOKE UP/OBEYED because by the mid- 2nd century both Sardis and the church no longer existed. **They failed to wake up and instead chose death.** Jesus closes with a challenge to all churches who read this letter including GRACEPOINTE- **Slide 30** if you have an ear, if you’re a true believer then hear what Jesus says and obey. **As we close, let me ask where are you on this chart? Slide 31**

**YOU TAKEAWAYS FOR OUR CHURCH**

1. **Slide 32 Unbeliever? Receive the spiritual life Jesus offers you.**
2. Admit you’ve sinned and want God’s forgiveness.
3. Believe Jesus took your judgment for you on the cross.
4. Confess that to God- tell Him these things.
5. **Slide 33 Believer? You say one thing/your life says another/Jesus knows the truth**

* Jesus knows the truth.
* Unbeliever? Confess your need for forgiveness/spiritual life.
* Truly believe? Then truly live for Jesus.

1. **Slide 34 True Believer- Keep faithful, keep growing, enjoy the spiritual impact Jesus will make through you**

**God has blessed GRACEPOINTE and based on what Jesus has said to Sardis, He will continue to bless and use us if we’ll remain faithful to His mission and His teaching from God’s Word.** Let’s stand and close in prayer.

**PODCAST: Pastor Harald takes us through what Jesus had to say to the church at Sardis. A church that was near death and on life support. Revelation 3:1-6; 1 Thessalonians 2:4; Matthew 10:32, 23:27-28**