

UNRAVELLING THE BOOK OF REVELATION | SESSION 16

# THE CHURCH OF SARDIS

*THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING  
REAL, DEEP AND AUTHENTIC*

(REV. 3:1-6)



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This is the most happening church in town, buzzing with lots of activities, ongoing webinars, conferences, community service, outreach programs, etc. Surely this must be the coolest place to be?

**But what does Jesus think? What would Jesus say?**

**Man looks at the outward, but Jesus looks at the heart, whether there is truly life on the inside.** The Church of Sardis was outwardly alive and full of activities. They witnessed the greatest revival breaking out between AD 52 to 55. But 40 years later, they had lost their life and vibrancy in God. They looked good on the outside but had no reality of God in the inside! Hear what Jesus said to them,

***“I know your works that you have a name that you are alive, **but you are dead.**” (Rev. 3:1)***

**Ouch!!**

You see, God does not want us to just have a **form of godliness** (2 Tim. 3:5). He wants us to have a **real, authentic and deep relationship with Him**. God's closeness, His presence and His leadership are to be a norm in our lives. We are meant to be constantly plugged into Him, connected with His heart, living in intimacy with Him that brings forth life, joy and vitality in the spirit.

When Jesus says, "***You have a name that you are alive***", the word "*name*" means **reputation**. We are living in this era where we're more concerned about form rather than substance. But Jesus is more concerned about reality than reputation!

There are two primary messages in this letter to the Church of Sardis:





1.

## **IT IS A CALL TO THE CHURCH NOT TO LIVE ON PAST REPUTATION.**

Whether we are alive in God is not measured by what we had in the past but by what we have now.

2.

## **IT IS A CALL TO THE CHURCH NOT TO LIVE ON FALSE REPUTATION.**

Doing a lot of spiritual activities may not necessarily mean that we are alive. The Church of Sardis kept themselves busy because they had a reputation to maintain. Outwardly “alive” but inwardly dead, they were now living on false reputation!



**How do we overcome this issue of spiritual deadness? We must cultivate and sustain life and vibrancy in the spirit.**

**Jesus gave us five exhortations in Revelation 3:2–3 on how we can do so, namely to watch, strengthen, remember, hold fast and repent.**



# 1. WATCH (REV. 3:2)

Watch and pray is the most emphasized exhortation of Jesus when He taught on the End Times.

There are four different kinds of watches in the Bible;

1. Watching our hearts  
(Prov. 4:23; Lk. 21:34–36)

Proverbs 4:23 exhorts us to guard our heart, for it is the wellspring of life. Our heart needs to be constantly connected with the Lord to have life.

In the Bible, there are four primary core values or lifestyles that enable us to keep our hearts connected to God and to experience life. If we have life in God, we will also manifest these four core values.

They are:



A person is running on a wooden ramp that slopes upwards from the bottom left towards the middle of the frame. The ramp is made of light-colored wood planks. The background is a solid grey sky.

## ***WATCH***

Prayer is about connecting our hearts with God in conversation. Someone whose heart is connected with the Lord and alive will have the desire to pray.

“Watching and praying” is the second kind of “*watch*” that Matthew 26:41 and Mark 13:33 refer to.

## ***INTIMACY WITH GOD AND HOLINESS***

When our lives are set apart for God, and we walk intimately with God, our hearts will be alive.

This is also the third kind of “Watch” — the guarding and the prioritizing of cultivating intimacy with Jesus (Matt. 25:1–13).



## ***EXTRAVAGANT OFFERING***

A true measure of our hearts being alive is seen in us **living in wholehearted abandonment in Christ**. We give extravagantly of our time and resources out of love and devotion to Jesus.

## ***MOVING UNDER THE PROPHETIC LEADERSHIP OF GOD***

Someone who is plugged in to the heart of God will know what God wants and what He is saying. The person who is connected with the Lord will live his life under the leadership of the Spirit, develop a history with God and a faith that is real and authentic.




The fourth kind of “Watch” is about developing an understanding of End Times in accordance with the Scriptures (Matt. 24:42–44).



Truly, we need to take heed and watch our hearts, our prayer life, prioritizing our intimacy with the Lord and cultivating understanding of the times and seasons, so that we will not suffer loss!





## **2. STRENGTHEN THE THINGS WHICH REMAIN (REV. 3:2)**

Jesus' second exhortation is for the Church of Sardis to build on what He had given them during the revival. They are to deepen the foundation and strengthen the message and the values that He had deposited in them.

## **3. REMEMBER HOW YOU HAVE RECEIVED AND HEARD (REV. 3:3)**

Jesus wanted the church to recall how they used to be, to examine and evaluate themselves so that they could cry out to God for restoration and for the fullness of what God has for them.



## **4. HOLD FAST (REV. 3:3)**


God wants us to stay with it and to keep the course, through times of mundane and delay, and through times of intensity and persecution, persevering right till the end. That speaks of maturity and faithfulness on the part of the saints.

## **5. REPENT (REV. 3:3)**

Repent means to make practical lifestyle changes so that our decisions of watching, strengthening and remembering can take root and bear fruit over time.







Jesus “*coming as a thief if we will not watch*” **speaks of strategic seasons where He will draw near to evaluate us.** If we are found faithful and watching when He comes, He will promote us. If not, we could be disciplined and could suffer loss.

There are three rewards **if we overcome spiritual deadness** by sustaining a life of watching.

We will be clothed in **bright and brilliant garments** in eternity. The garments tell of our decisions of love, devotion and dedication to Jesus in this life.

***The beauty and glory of the garments  
reveal how God feels about the  
way we love Him in this age.***



Jesus promises that **the names of those who overcome will be written in the Book of Life.** The removal of a person's name from the Book of Life will not be initiated by Jesus but will be based on decisions made by the person through his or her own free will.

When we accepted Jesus as our Lord and Saviour, our names were entered into the Book of Life. **Jesus is not the One who initiates the blotting out of our names from the Book of Life.** If it does happen, it will be because of the decisions we make along the way.



One of the crucial decisions we need to make is to deal with the deadness in our hearts. Jesus is warning us that if we do not do so, we can gradually turn away from Him and eventually depart from our faith (1 Tim. 4:1)! This is why it is so crucial to deal with the deadness in our hearts and to cultivate life and vibrancy in our spirit.

When Jesus says that He will confess our name before the Father, He is saying that He will publicly recognize our nobility and our faithfulness. He will lovingly tell of the story of our choices and decisions to His Father before all the angels and the multitudes of people in heaven.

What an honor and joy it will be!

*May we be ones who keep watching, strengthening and cultivating the life and vibrancy in our hearts and have a real, deep and authentic relationship with Jesus. It will be worth it all!*





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