

Chapter 3

The Letter to Sardis

[1] **And unto the servant of the church in Sardis, write; These things says he who has the seven stars, which are the seven servants of God; I know your works, that you have a name that you live, and are not dead.**

[2] **Be watchful therefore, and strengthen those who remain, who are ready to die; for I have not found your works perfect before God.**

[3] **Remember therefore how you have received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore you shall not watch, I will come on you as a thief, and you shall not know what hour I will come upon you.**

[4] **You have a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy.**

[5] **He that overcomes, 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.**

[6] **He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches.**

[Verse 1]; I know your works, that you have a name that you live, and are not dead. [IV]

I know your works, that you have a name that you live, and are dead. [KJ]

Because the word “not,” is not in the King James bible, scholars label the church at Sardis as “the dead church.” Though Jesus did not label it as being dead, he did say in [Verse 2] that their works were not perfect before God, and that they should be watchful, and to strengthen those who were ready to die. The admonition has always been that those who are strong are to help the weak, who may be struggling with their faith or with life in general. Apostle Paul said “We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak.” [Romans 15:1] *see also [D&C 83:19b]

In [Verses 2 and 3], Jesus’ message to the saints at Sardis is that they should be watchful, for if they were not watchful, his coming to them would be as a thief in the night.

[Luke 12:44-52] ... the coming of the Lord is as a thief in the night. [45] And it is like unto a man who is an householder, who, if he watches not his goods, the thief will come in an hour of which he is not aware, and take his goods, ... [47] be therefore ready also; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you think not. [52] Blessed is that servant whom his Lord shall find, when he comes, so doing. [53] ... he will make him ruler over all that he has. [54] But the evil servant is he who is not found watching. ... [55] The Lord of that servant will come in a day he looks not for, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him down, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. [56] And that servant who knew his Lord's will, and prepared not for his Lord's coming, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. [57] But he that knew not his Lord's will, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required; and to whom the Lord has committed much, of him will men ask the more. [Matthew 24:49-56] [Mark 13:52-61]

[2 **Peter 3:9-13**] The Lord is not slack concerning his promise and coming, as some men count slackness; but long-suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. [10] But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall shake, and the earth also shall tremble, and the mountains shall melt, and pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be filled with fervent heat; the earth also shall be filled, and the corruptible works which are therein shall be burned up. [11] If then all these things shall be destroyed, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, [12] Looking unto, and preparing for the day of the coming of the Lord wherein the corruptible things of the heavens being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the mountains shall melt with fervent heat? [13] Nevertheless, if we shall endure, we shall be kept according to his promise. And we look for a new heavens, and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness.

[1 **Thessalonians 5:2-6**] For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. [3] For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction comes upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. [4] But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. [5] You are all the children of light, and the children of the day; we are not of the night, nor of darkness. [6] Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.

The Promise:

[Verse 5] He that overcomes, ... **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.

It should be emphasized that the Book of Revelation, after [Chapter 4], is almost entirely symbolic; virtually everything is expressed metaphorically. Many writers tend to ignore this and interpret most of the metaphors as being literal. But there are very few similes in the first four chapters, and one shall now be considered, which is “garments,” a.k.a. “raiment,” a.k.a. “robes,” a.k.a. “linen,” Taken literally, these refer to the clothes we wear; but taken figuratively, and in the context which they are given in this book, they refer to one’s spiritual clothing.

Thus the Lord said to the church in Sardis in [Verses 4 and 5]; that those “**which have not defiled their garments**,” and “**he that overcomes**,” “**shall walk with me in white raiment**; for they are worthy.” So, just what is one’s spiritual garments, or raiment, and how does one defile them?

Defile: 1 : to make filthy 2 : CORRUPT 3 : to violate the chastity or sanctity of 5 : DISHONOR

Isaiah saw that our iniquities clothe us in a certain way, for he said that; “We have sinned; we are all as an unclean thing, and **all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags**; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.” [Isaiah 64:6]

Just as we wear clothing to protect us from the elements of storms, heat of the sun, wind and rain, and et cetera; we must also clothe ourselves for protection against those spiritual elements which victimize us. We must clothe ourselves with righteousness. John saw the Church; a.k.a. the Bride of Christ, “arrayed in fine linen, **clean and white**; **for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints**. [Revelation 19:8] We clothe and protect ourselves by building our beliefs upon a rock.

[**Matthew 7:34-35**] Whosoever hears these sayings of mine **and do them**, I will liken him unto a wise man, who built his house upon a rock, and the rains descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not; for it was founded upon a rock. [**35**] And every one that hears these sayings of mine, **and do them not**, shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand; and the rains descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it.

Not all of Sardis' members were deceived by Satan; some stood watch over their household. Alma said "there can no man be saved except his garments are washed white: Yes, his garments must be purified until they are cleansed from all stain, through the blood of him of whom it has been spoken by our fathers who should come to redeem his people from their sins. [**Alma 3:38-40**]

[**Revelation 7:9-17**] I beheld a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindred, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, [**14**] ... These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. ... [**16**] They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. [**17**] For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

[**Revelation 16:15**] Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.

[**Verse 5**] I will not blot out his name out of the book of life. * Ref: [**Chapters 13, 17 & 20**]

The Letter to Philadelphia

[7] And to the servant of the church in Philadelphia write; These things say he that is holy, he that is true, he that has the key of David, he that opens, and no man shuts; and shuts, and no man opens;

[8] I know your works; behold, I have set before you an open door, and no man can shut it; for you have a little strength, and have kept my word, and have not denied my name.

In [**Verse 7**] the Lord referred to himself as "he that is holy," "he that is true," and "he that has the key of David." The holy and the true part of his description are self evident, but the part about the key of David may seem somewhat mysterious. Lets see if we can figure it out.

Abijah, king of Judah 915 B.C. - 913 B..C., said to Jeroboam, king of Israel that "Ought you not to know that the Lord God of Israel gave the kingdom over Israel to David forever?" [**2 Chr 13:5**]

The Lord had Isaiah to prophesy the following about another king over Israel, referring to Jesus; "And the key of the house of David I will lay upon his (*Jesus* ') shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open." [**Isaiah 22:22**]

Also in [**Verse 7**] Jesus identifies himself as "he that has the key of David, he that opens, and no man shuts; and shuts, and no man opens;" he goes on to say "I know your works; behold, **I have set before you an open door**, and no man can shut it; for you have a little strength, and have kept my word, and have not denied my name." [**Verse 8**]

[**Luke 13:25-27**] Therefore, when once the Lord of the kingdom is risen up, and has shut the door of the kingdom, then you shall stand without, and knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us, But the Lord shall answer and say unto you, I will not receive you, for you know not which place you are from [**26**] Then shall you begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in your presence, and you have taught in our streets. [**27**] But he shall say, I tell you, you know not where you are from; depart from me, all workers of iniquity. A similar narrative is recorded in [**Matthew 25:1-12**]

So, Jesus made David king over the house of Israel, and David, through hard times, held the twelve tribes intact. Jesus clearly esteemed David highly, for he repeatedly spoke of him in the scriptures.

[**Isaiah 9:6-7**] ... Of the increase of his government and peace there is no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice ...

[**1 Kings 15:4-5**] . . . for David's sake did the Lord his God give him a lamp in Jerusalem, ... Because David did right in the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aside from all that he commanded him, to sin against the Lord; but repented of the evil all the days of his life,

[**1 Kings 11:33**] ... and he (Solomon) repents not as did David his father, that I may forgive him.

[**Psalms 132:10-18**] ...The Lord has sworn in truth unto David; he will not turn from it;

[**1 Kings 2:45**] . . . the throne of David shall be established before the Lord forever.

[**Ezekiel 34:23-24**] And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. [**24**] And I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the Lord have spoken it.

[**Ezekiel 37:21-25**] Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, wherever they have gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land; ... And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd; they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them. ... and my servant David shall be their prince forever.

[9] Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.

[10] Because you have kept the word of my patience, I also will keep you from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

[11] Behold, I come quickly; hold that fast which you have, that no man take your crown.

[12] Him that overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out; and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, this is New Jerusalem, which shall come down out of heaven from my God; and I will write upon him my new name.

[13] He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches.

Obviously the saints at Philadelphia were good people. Jesus did not say one bad thing against them. In [**Verse 9**] is mentioned again those who said they were Jews, but were not, but were of the synagogue of Satan. These were likely of the same group trying to disrupt the church in Smyrna, mentioned in [**Chapter 2, Verse 9**]. These imposters would have to worship before the saints feet and they would know that Jesus loved his saints at Philadelphia because, as is written in [**Verse 10**],

“they had kept his word.” Jesus therefore told them that he would keep them from the hour of temptation, which would come upon all the world to try them. In [Verse 11] he admonished them to hold fast to that which they had, that no man take their crown. Hold fast to the his words.

The Promise:

[Verse 12] Him that overcomes **I will make a pillar in the temple of my God**, and he shall go no more out; and **I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, this is New Jerusalem, which shall come down out of heaven from my God; and I will write upon him my new name.**

Pillar: n. A supporter; that which sustains or upholds; that on which some superstructure rests.

[Galatians 2:9] And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me (*Paul*) and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship.

[Exodus 13:21-22] And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night. [22] He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.

The pillars of [Verse 12] are real and allegorical. They were real to the children of Israel, but are allegorical for all time that the Lord, in his own way, will lead his people through the heat of day, and that the glorious light of his word will guide them through nighttime’s spiritual darkness.

Jesus said that he would write upon him that overcomes, the name of his God and the name of the city of his God, the New Jerusalem, which would come down out of heaven from God; and he would write upon him his new name. * “his new name,” see letter to Pergamos in [Chapter 2].

The Letter to Laodicea

[14] And unto the servant of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things says the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

[15] I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot; I would you were cold or hot.

[16] So then because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth.

[17] Because you say, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and know not that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked;

[18] I counsel you to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich; and white raiment, that you may be clothed, and that the shame of your nakedness do not appear; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.

[19] As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore, and repent.

[20] Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

[21] To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

[22] He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches.

In [Verse 14] Jesus identifies himself to the servant of the church at Laodicea a little differently than he had to the servants of the other churches. He called himself the “Amen.” This is the only place in the bible that “Amen” is used in this context, and since the word’s orthography has such slight differences, its rather easy to see it’s meaning.

Amen: [verb]; to confirm, establish, verify, to trust, or give confidence.

[noun]; truth, firmness, trust, confidence, and perhaps unchangeable.

[adjective]; firm, stable.

It is commonly used at the end of a prayer to mean; so be it, or be it established or firm. But, it is used in this text to connote that; He is Truth; He is unchangeable; He is firm; he is trustworthy!

He also called himself “the faithful and true witness,” *which is similar to the definition of Amen*, and “the beginning of the creation of God.” *Of which the following verifies to be true;*

[Genesis 1:2] I am the Beginning and the End; the Almighty God. By my Only Begotten I created these things.

[Genesis 1:27] And I, God, said unto mine Only Begotten, which was with me from the beginning, Let **us** make man in **our** image, after our likeness; and it was so.

[John 1:1-3] In the beginning was the gospel preached through the Son. And the gospel was the word, and the word was with the Son, and the Son was with God, and the Son was of God. [2] The same was in the beginning with God. [3] All things were made by him; and **without him was not anything made which was made.**

[D&C 76:3h] ... he is the Only Begotten of the Father; that by him, and through him, and of him, the worlds are and were created; [Genesis 3:1] [Genesis 4:9]

In [Verse 15] Jesus told them that they were neither cold nor hot and that he would that they should be one or the other. And in [Verse 16] he said that because they were lukewarm, neither cold nor hot, he would spew them out of his mouth. Why would Jesus prefer his church members to be cold rather than lukewarm? If cold = lies, and hot = truth, would it not be better to embrace some of the truth than not to accept any of it? Well, probably, but this would not make them lukewarm; this would simply make them warm. Lukewarm water results when cold **and** hot water are mixed together, and in a similar way, a ‘lukewarm gospel’ results when lies and truths are mixed together! This was the problem that plagued the church in Laodicea.

A lukewarm church is one that is characterized by complacency or by compromise. “Therefore, wo be unto him that is at ease in Zion.” [2 Nephi 12:30] A church alive with the Spirit is easy to recognize; as is a lifeless, stone cold, church. But a lukewarm church, one which intermingles lies with the truth, deceives more people because the lies camouflage the truth and make the mixture seem more feasible and desirable, especially to the natural mind.

Compromise is, without a doubt, Satan’s most effective tool; using lies and truths conjointly in order to make the lies appear to be a part of the truth. Thus, the lies are hidden by the truth, and vice versa. That is the way Satan deceived Eve in the garden. He told her a lie and then the truth;

“ And the serpent said unto the woman, You shall not surely die (the lie); for God knows, that in the day you eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil (the truth).” [Genesis 3:10] **the serpent was merely repeating what God told his Son;*

[**Genesis 3:28**] And I, the Lord God, said unto mine Only Begotten, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil;

The more a lie is made to look like the truth, the more people it deceives. For example; If a piece of broken glass is placed at one end of a table and a diamond at the other end, and between the two are other pieces of glass; and the closer ones to the diamond look more like a diamond until they are almost identical. Now, somewhere in between, most of us could distinguish the glass from the diamond. But, unless we are lapidaries, the closer we get to the diamond, the more uncertain we would become. That's the way it is with truths and lies; one must learn to recognize imitations, for Satan is good at making them. And the better the imitation, the more he deceives.

Lapidary: [noun] an expert in precious stones or in the art of cutting them. [plural] lapidaries.

In [**Verse 17**] Jesus told them, “Because you say, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing;” (Laodicea was a banking center, and also noted for manufacturing luxurious garments of black glossy wool); “you don’t even know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.” Then in [**Verse 18**] he counseled them to buy of him gold **tried in the fire**, that they might be rich; and white raiment, that they may be clothed so that the shame of their nakedness would not appear. [**Malachi 3:1-3**] “who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appears? for he is like a refiner's fire, ... And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver.”

[**Zechariah 13:9**] I will bring *them* through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried; they shall call on my name, and I will hear them; I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God. [**2 Corinthians 5:2**] We groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven; [**3**] If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. (white raiment was studied in the letter to Sardis, Chapter 3, pages 17-19)

Continuing with [**Verse 18**], the Lord told them to anoint their eyes with eye salve, that they may see. (Laodicea was also noted for its medical school that made a powder for treating eye problems.)

Jesus basically told them that in spite of their cultural achievements, they were on the critical list when it came to their spiritual health.

In [**Verse 19**] Jesus said, “as many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; ... [**Proverbs 19:18**] Chasten your son while there is hope, and let not your soul spare for his crying. [**Hebrews 12:5-11**] My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when you are rebuked of him; [**6**] For whom the Lord loves he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives.

[**7**] If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chastens not? [**8**] But if you be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then you are bastards, and not sons. [**9**] Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

[**10**] For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. [**11**] Now no chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

Chasten: (notice the two directions the definitions take)

1. To correct by punishment; to punish; to inflict pain for the purpose of reclaiming an offender.
2. To purify from errors or faults.

Like Daniel, we need to learn to purify our hearts from errors or faults, i.e., chasten ourselves.

[**Daniel 10:12**] Fear not, Daniel; for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to chasten yourself before your God, your words were heard.

[**Titus 2:13-14**] Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; [**14**] Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. [**1 Corinthians 14:12**]

Jesus finishes [**Verse 19**] with this; **be zealous** therefore, and **repent**.

Paul said of Israel that “they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. [**Romans 10:1-3**]

Perhaps the most definitive definition of repentance is written in the book of Isaiah.

[**Isaiah 1:16-17**] Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before my eyes; **cease to do evil; Learn to do well.**

[**Genesis 6:59-60**] And I have given unto you another law and commandment; wherefore teach it unto your children, that all men, everywhere, must repent, or they can in no wise inherit the kingdom of God. [**60**] For no unclean thing can dwell there, or dwell in his presence;

[**Matthew 7:22-23**] Repent, therefore, and enter in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many there be who go in thereat. [**23**] Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leads unto life, and few there be that find it.

Strait: [adjective] strict, rigorous, confined within narrow limits. [noun] a narrow channel.

In [**Verse 20**] Jesus said “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”

Sometimes one just needs to stop and listen in order to hear his voice. As the Psalmist said; [**Psalms 46:10**] **Be still, and know that I am God;**

It is difficult to hear his voice when it is being eclipsed by the many distractions of the world. He stands at our door and knocks; but too often we keep him standing there! And the scriptures show very few instances where Jesus actually forced the door open.

The Promise:

[**Verse 21**] **To him that overcomes I will grant to sit with me in my throne**, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. “**The heaven is my throne**, and the earth is my footstool; where is the house that you build unto me, ...?” [**Isaiah 66:1**]

[**Acts 7:48-49**] The Most High dwells not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, [**49**] **Heaven is my throne**, and earth is my footstool; what house will you build me? saith the Lord; or what is the place of my rest? [**Acts 17:24-25**]

To him that overcomes, Jesus promises a place with him **in his throne**; i.e., **in his heaven!**