

“Wake and Walk” (Revelation 3:1–6) (11.7.21)

Revelation 3:1–6 (NIV84)

3 “To the angel of the church in Sardis write:

These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. ² Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God. ³ Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.

⁴ Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy. ⁵ He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels. ⁶ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

The word of God for the people of God.

LET US PRAY.

Title: **“Wake and Walk”**

INTRODUCTION:

In my bedroom, there are three windows. Each night we carefully close the curtains and drapes. We make sure

they overlap, but also make sure they cover the entire window. Why? When the sun rises, we do not want any light to be able to come through into the room in the morning. Once we see the light, we are unable to sleep.

Unfortunately, the Church in Sardis, and many churches, have seen the Risen Son at one time, have seen the light of day, but have fallen back asleep. Maybe they only intended to hit the snooze button for a few minutes more sleep; not realizing that habit can become a way of life, or rather, a way of death. You see, that is the way the Lord Jesus characterizes a sleepy church. Every sleeping church needs to wake up, stay awake, and walk with the Lord Jesus.

BODY:



Let us take a minute and look at some background information on the Church in Sardis as it may give us some insight into their situation. I read this in the first commentary that I consulted and

was a little skeptical, but the next commentary gave pretty much the same history; and, so did the next one. One reason I share this with you is as an example. Do not rely only on one source and I invite you to double-check anything that I teach and preach. I encourage you to do it.

“Sardis is thirty miles to the east of Thyatira. This city, which occupies a proud acropolis (which is a citadel or fortified part of an ancient Greek city, typically built on a hill.) commanding the intersection of five highways, is an

ancient city with a famous past, but by the midpoint of the first century, a declining future. It was once the capital of the Lydian kingdom, which had boasted the fabulously rich King Croesus.

But Sardis has had an odd history. Twice it was totally surprised and humiliated by military defeat. The city that seemed militarily impregnable had been defeated by Cyrus (549 b.c.) and Antiochus (218 b.c.), and on both occasions the city was taken by surprise in a nighttime attack by soldiers who quietly scaled her steep fortress walls. The earthquake of 17 AD destroyed the city, but through the kindness of Tiberius Caesar, the city had been rebuilt. [In appreciation, the people built a temple in his honor.] Now, in the second half of the first century, Sardis was once again prosperous, primarily because of its trade and its wool-dyeing industry.”



Again, in this message, Jesus identifies Himself using a portion of the description in the first chapter of Revelation and adds something more. Our NIV translation says Jesus holds the seven spirits of God with a footnote that offers the alternative seven-fold spirit of God. At first, it seems strange that God the Holy Spirit would be described this way, but it is consistent with two other places in Revelation.

Revelation 4:5 (NIV84) From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. Before the

throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God.

Revelation 5:6 (NIV84) Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

Alexander Maclaren explains: "It is a distinct reference to the personal spirit of God conceived of in the manifoldness of His operations rather than in the unity of His Personality. That spirit comes permeating, enlightening, illuminating, vivifying, discerning, and strengthening all of us if we yield ourselves to it.

There is the antidote for a dead Church, a living spirit in the sevenfold perfectness of His operations. He is the spirit of consolation, of adoption, of supplication, of holiness and wisdom, of power and of love, and of sound mind, and into all our deadness there will come the life-breath which shall surely quicken it all.

That which is unique in the history of Christianity as compared with all other religions, its power of self-recuperation, and when it is apparently nearest extinction, the marvelous way in which it flames up again because the Spirit of the Lord is poured forth."



This is a frequent command of scripture. Here are a few examples:

Isaiah 26:19 (ESV)

19 Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise.

You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy!

For your dew is a dew of light,
and the earth will give birth to the dead.

Isaiah 52:1 (ESV)

Awake, awake,

put on your strength, O Zion;

put on your beautiful garments,

O Jerusalem, the holy city;

for there shall no more come into you
the uncircumcised and the unclean.

Ephesians 5:13–16 (ESV)

13 But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, **14** for anything that becomes visible is light.

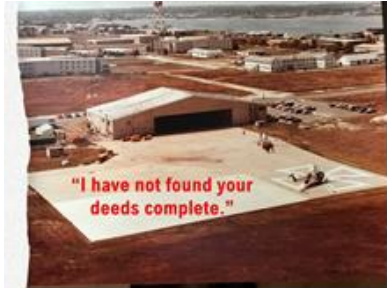
Therefore it says,

“Awake, O sleeper,

and arise from the dead,

and Christ will shine on you.”

¹⁵ Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶ making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.



Here is an old picture of Coast Guard Air Station Cape May. I was stationed there twice, and it is kind of weird for me to visit there and see that it has been knocked down. As you know, Cape May is

surrounded by water. There is a thriving fishing fleet and tourist economy.

There was always a duty section on watch at the Air Station – every second of every day. Sometimes we stood our 24 hour watch was on a four day rotation and sometimes a five day rotation. This was in addition to normal work hours. When the work for the day was done, the duty section would go upstairs. There was a kitchen to prepare our meals and a bunkroom where we would sleep.

When someone was in distress, the SAR alarm (search and rescue alarm) would go off. The two pilots, flight mechanic, and rescue swimmer would wake up, get dressed in appropriate seasonal flight gear, and rush downstairs. The rest of the duty section would already have gotten down into the hangar, opened the large doors, and started pushing the helicopter outside. We wanted to get the aircraft airborne as quickly and as safely as possible. A couple minutes could mean life or death.

While not every day included dramatic rescues, there was a lot of maintenance, training, planning and preparation that was required. Then there were other missions that needed to be done too. It could be environmental protection, law enforcement, or homeland security. There was no end to the work and often times resources had to be stretched to get it all done. I will leave it to you to see the parallels for the church.

- What you Received
- Remember
- Repent
- Obey

What have you, what have believers received? There is so much material that it would take hours to cover it all. Let me just hit a few highlights:

Romans 5:8 (NIV84) But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

1 Corinthians 6:19–20 (NIV84) Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? **You are not your own;** you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

Philippians 4:7 (NIV84) And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Jesus proclaims in John 10:10 (NIV84) **“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”** An abundant life.

Revelation 19:7–9 (NIV84)

7 Let us rejoice and be glad
and give him glory!

For the wedding of the Lamb has come,
and his bride has made herself ready.

8 Fine linen, bright and clean,
was given her to wear."

(Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)

9 Then the angel said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those
who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!' "
And he added, "These are the true words of God."

REMEMBER: These were the scriptures that I
remembered first. What promises of God do you
remember? What has God done in your life that you
remember? The Bible gives us so many examples of what
God has done. Where have you seen Jesus in your life
and the lives of others? Remembering these things is
fundamental to staying awake in your faith – to be alive.

REPENT: Every time we stray from the Lord's way, we
need to repent – turn back to the path of God. How often
do we need to repent? Every time we get out of step with
the Lord Jesus, we need to repent. We need to change
our mind, change our heart, change our walk.

OBEY: There are 222 verses in our NIV translation that
address obedience. You may be getting tired of me
reminding you of Jesus' words in the Gospel of John.
Here is one sample: John 14:15 (NIV84) "If you love me,
you will obey what I command." The closer we walk with

Jesus, the more natural will our obedience become the norm. Can you imagine sinning with Jesus beside you?



When Jesus speaks about coming like a thief, He means He will come when you least expect Him. You will be surprised.

Last Monday morning, I went to a Pastor's Breakfast at Victory Bible Church in Hammonton. One of the pastors at my table told a story of a man who had recently come to speak with him. As the discussion unfolded, the pastor began to remember the man. They had spoken together 22 years before. The pastor was taken aback by what the man was asking. The man was trying to figure out if Jesus' return, the Rapture, was imminent. He was trying to figure out if he could keep on living the way he was living. Metaphorically, this man was checking the time and continually hitting the snooze button on his alarm clock.



Jesus speaks here and in other "wake up" scriptures that I have already shared with you about the necessity of right living. Unsoiled clean white clothes represent purity and goodness. This is not only for this life but is paralleled in the heavenly life. Remember that Sardis was involved in the wool business, so they would have a special appreciation for this characterization of worthiness.

In Every Message

Overcomers



A hymn, "Faith Is the Victory,"
by John H. Yates

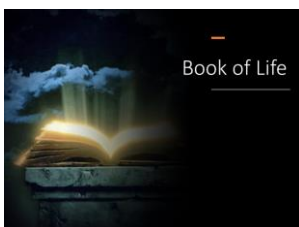
1. Encamped along the hills of
light, Ye Christian soldiers, rise,
And press the battle ere the night
Shall veil the glowing skies.

Against the foe in vales below Let all our strength be
hurled; Faith is the victory, we know, That overcomes the
world.

2. His banner over us is love, Our sword the Word of
God; We tread the road the saints above With shouts of
triumph trod. By faith they, like a whirlwind's breath,
Swept on o'er ev'ry field; The faith by which they
conquered death Is still our shining shield.

3. To him that overcomes the foe White raiment shall be
giv'n; Before the angels he shall know His name
confessed in Heav'n; Then onward from the hills of light,
Our hearts with love aflame; We'll vanquish all the hosts
of night, In Jesus' conq'ring name.

Chorus. Faith is the victory! Faith is the victory! O
glorious victory That overcomes the world.



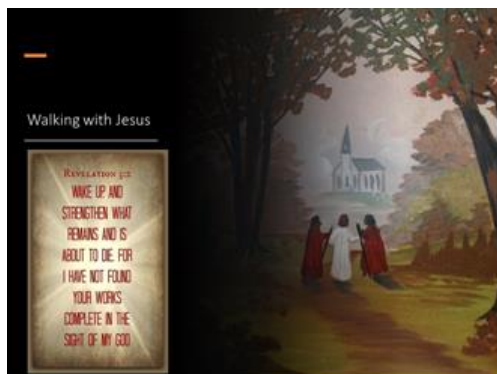
Book of Life

From another Alexander Maclaren
sermon, titled "The Book of Life:"

"In Christ's character of the Lamb —
that is, of the Sacrifice for the sins of

the world — slain for us all, He has made it possible that any names should be written on that page. Then, again, note how this symbol suggests to us that to be enrolled in the Book is to be a citizen of heaven. The name being "written in heaven" implies that the true native soil of the man is where his name is written. He is inscribed on the register of the community to which He belongs. He lives in a far-away colony, but he is a native of the metropolis. Again, let me remind you that to be written in that Book implies being the objects of Divine energy and Divine love. "I know thee by name" said the Divine voice, through the prophet, to the Great Conqueror before He was born. "I know thee by name," saith the Lord, to each of us, if our hearts are humbly trusting in His Divine power."

My friends, where is your citizenship? What are you willing to do to keep your name in the Book of Life?



Let me give you two ways we as individuals may be asleep. The first one is a tweet from now semi-retired pastor Tim Keller from a few years ago:

Are you sleepwalking? "Self-deception is not the worst

thing you can do, but it's the means by which we do the very worst things. The sin that is most distorting your life right now is the one you can't see."

This week, I read this blog: “ **“The most difficult lie I have ever contended with is this: life is a story about me.”**”

I struggle with this so very deeply. Not simply from a superficial selfishness, but on a foundational level. My worldview, my feelings, my insecurities, my anxieties, and even my theology are all hopelessly, blindly self-referential. I imagine it’s the same for many of us. Because being a Christian is accepting Jesus as the center of life, the church’s worship must be a real alternative to that.

But I’m terribly afraid the church isn’t being an alternative, at all. It’s using the worship gathering, which from the foundation of the Christian church was about doing *God’s* story, to affirm us in our deep commitment to ourselves as the center of our own universe.”

CONCLUSION:

Does any part of Jesus’ message to the Church in Sardis resonate in you? Does it apply to you personally? Does it apply to the Angel of Emmaus Church? Outside, we are surrounded by a graveyard. The temperatures are dropping and soon we will get an occasional blanket of snow. In our sanctuary, are we awake? Are we alive? Are we on fire for God?

This week, I performed a marriage at the Carriage House for a young couple I have been counseling for several months. Before the actual ceremony, the father of the bride and I were talking. He asked me, “How did you do

it? I tried to get her interested in church for years with no luck.”

When I counselled them about marriage, I counselled them about God, about the Lord Jesus. I taught them that the Bible was the Word of God. I shared things from my own life. Over the last seven years, you have probably heard all the things that I shared with this young couple.

They told me they were hearing things they never heard any place else. The Holy Spirit had prepared their hearts and they were awakened to their need for the Lord. They were actually putting into practice the things I was teaching them and finding them to be true.

Observing all the festivities of the wedding, I thought about the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. If we can experience such joy in this earthly setting, imagine it in the perfect heavenly setting.

I long to hear Jesus speak my name before our heavenly Father and His angels. Do you?

Jesus says, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

Come seven-fold Spirit of God, come.

Amen and amen. Let us pray.