

PREFACE

These notes are to serve as a blessing and help to those studying the word with Pastor Neil Spencer. Pastor Neil does not claim to fully agree with all the thoughts, beliefs, writings, or teachings of every named source/person in these notes. The Bible is the ultimate authority & ALL believers are to be Bereans (Acts 17.10-11).

INTRODUCTION: Teaching Notes (2 Slides)**1. JESUS LOVES CHURCH**

1. 2nd section of Revelation, Jesus' love to the **CHURCH Revealed (Tough/Tender/Timely/Thorough)**
2. **REVEALED** — the centerpiece of Revelation — revealing JESUS & things that will soon take place (1.1)
2. In chapters 2/3 we see 7 letters/msg's to 7 churches ... 4 things to take note of concerning these churches:
 1. These were 7 actual churches in modern day Turkey that existed in John's day.
 2. These letters give clarity to the LOVE that Jesus has: commending/warning/teaching/critiquing
 3. These letters are universal/personal
 4. These letters follow a a similar pattern:
 1. **Church**—Identification the city where the church resides.
 2. **Characterization** — Insightful/Relevant description of Jesus to that local church
 3. **Commendation**—Encouragement from Jesus
 4. **Critique/Complaint**—Warning of something erroneous or even egregious.
 5. **Command**—Instruction of how do/get/stay right...
 6. **Counsel/Caution** — Exhortation & even warning to all believes
 7. **Comfort**—Jesus offers the genuine believers words of comfort & encouragement for the future.
3. So, let's consider the 5th church that Jesus wrote a letter to, the church in Sardis
 1. Sardis is the church that that REPUTATION but... nothing really going for them.
 2. Hold reputation lightly; integrity/authenticity tightly // facade fades //authenticity accrues interest.

REVELATION 3.1—6

8 *“Write this letter to the angel of the church in Sardis. This is the message from the one who has the sevenfold Spirit of God and the seven stars: “I know all the things you do, and that you have a reputation for being alive—but you are dead. 2 Wake up! Strengthen what little remains, for even what is left is almost dead. I find that your actions do not meet the requirements of my God. 3 Go back to what you heard and believed at first; hold to it firmly. Repent and turn to me again. If you don’t wake up, I will come to you suddenly, as unexpected as a thief. 4 “Yet there are some in the church in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes with evil. They will walk with me in white, for they are worthy. 5 All who are victorious will be clothed in white. I will never erase their names from the Book of Life, but I will announce before my Father and his angels that they are mine. 6 “Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches.*

1. **Church:** Sardis

1. Sardis was an important/wealthy crossroads capital city // a trade & military center.
 1. The main religion/worship... “nature cult” built on the idea of death & rebirth.
 2. Known for its production of woolen garments // consider what Jesus says to this church.
2. Located at the junction of 5 main roads, about 50 miles east of Ephesus.
 1. Built on a high bluff, w/ the city-center sitting nearly 1,500ft above the main roads.
 2. B/c of its height & almost impossible access, kinda proud — zip code envy was thing for Sardis...
3. Interestingly, Sardis had a graveyard called the Cemetery of One Thousand Hills.
 1. From 7 miles away you could see not only the temple of Diana (or Artemis) atop the acropolis
 2. But also this cemetery filled with 100’s of burial mounds & tombstones.

2. **Characterization:** how Jesus connects to this church...

1. V1 *This is the message from the one who has the sevenfold Spirit of God and the seven stars:*
2. Why does Jesus give this description?
 1. Jesus holds the ultimate position (7 stars/pastors) & power (7-fold Spirit)
 2. Skip Heitzig says, *“The church of Sardis lacked the one thing it needed the most, which is the Holy Spirit. So Jesus introduces Himself as “He who has the seven Spirits of God” (v. 1). He’s using an idiom borrowed from Isaiah 11:2, which denotes the fullness of the Holy Spirit. A dead church needs the infusion of the sevenfold Spirit of God, just as a spiritually dead individual does. The church at Sardis had become so much like the world around it that it could no longer confront its society. That’s what “spiritually dead” means.”*
 3. Warren Weirsbe, *“All of the church’s man-made programs can never bring life, any more than a circus can resurrect a corpse. The church was born when the Spirit of God descended on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), and its life comes from the Spirit. When the Spirit is grieved, the church begins to lose life and power. When sin is confessed and church members get right with God and with each other, then the Spirit infuses new life—revival!”*
3. It’s not location, activity, wealth, or connections that bring life... it’s only the Spirit of God.

3. **Commendation:** none given // *I know all the things you do, and that you have a reputation for being alive...*

4. **Critique/Complaint:** *but, you are dead...*

1. There was reputation without reality, form w/out force, veneer, but no vitality.
 1. Interesting/Amazing how Jesus connects with the ppl of this area...
 2. The city preoccupied with death... (Cemetery of One Thousand Hills)... Jesus says, you are dead.
 3. Jesus was truly a master at connecting with those he was speaking with...

4. He was able to take a situation, circumstance, familiarity, culture, or a dynamic of what the ppl were familiar with & relate it to a spiritual truth.
2. Here's the interesting thing about what Jesus does, he doesn't participate in *cancel culture*... He could've canceled these believers... But look at what he does next... He gives them commands... He gives them instruction... a pathway forward...
5. **Command: 2 Wake up! Strengthen what little remains**, for even what is left is almost dead. I find that your actions do not meet the requirements of my God. **3 Go back** to what you heard and believed at first; **hold to it firmly. Repent and turn to me again.** If you don't wake up, I will come to you suddenly, as unexpected as a thief.
 1. In this section we see 7 Keys To Revival
 1. Wake Up
 1. This is one of the greatest needs today ... to move from WOKE to AWAKE
 2. See life w/ spiritual eyes, See life for what it is // race to be run, JD to complete, fight to win
 3. The pathway from WOKE to AWAKE is the WORD of God.
 2. Strengthen What's Struggling
 1. The Greek word used here means "*stabilize that which is frail.*"
 2. The embers that are there... fan them into flame...
 3. You don't need something new... you need to strengthen that which is there...
 3. Finish What you Start
 1. *I find that your actions do not meet the requirements of my God.*
 2. The indication of this language is ... it's not about reputation, but relationship & resiliency.
 3. Bible Commentator: "*They performed duties of all kinds, but not duty completely. They were constantly beginning, but never brought anything to a proper end.*"
 4. Go Back to The Basics
 1. **3 Go back to what you heard and believed at first;**
 2. Look at their heritage—the things that once made them great — be renewed...
 3. "*See those things as a guidepost, not as a hitching post. We should never worship our past, we should all appreciate the journey that brought us to a present appreciation for God...*"
 1. His Word is True
 2. His Grace is Sufficient
 3. Jesus is Enough
 5. Hold Fast
 1. In the NLT, he says to hold to these basics *firmly*
 2. *Hold fast*, meaning "*be diligent,*" "*cling to,*" or "*take a firm grasp of.*"

3. Weirsbe, *“The impression is that the assembly in Sardis was not aggressive in its witness to the city. There was no persecution because there was no invasion of the enemy’s territory. No friction usually means no motion! The unsaved in Sardis saw the church as a respectable group of people who were neither dangerous nor desirable. They were decent people with a dying witness and a decaying ministry.”*

6. Repent

1. Change Your Thinking
2. To think differently or afterwards

7. Turn To Me Again

2. How do we do this?

1. I believe there are 4 Pillars: Life + Love + Community + Purpose

1. Life — Born again by the grace of God through Faith in JESUS (death/resurrection/spirit)
2. Love — Relationship with God — b/c of the **G**ospel, living for His **G**lory, **G**rowing
3. Community — Relationship with the Church:
 1. Gathering (serving/learning/fellowship/singing/communion/praying/giving)
 2. Grouping (conversation, application, prayer, engagement)

4. Purpose — Living on Mission

1. Going as an individual/family into your world to make disciples
2. Going with your church community into your world to make disciples

2. In your spiritual life you are left w/ 1 of 2 choices — **R**andom or **R**hythmic — *In everything you do, you can choose to be **RANDOM** or **RHYTHMIC**. Random produces irregularity & failure. Rhythms produce regularity & fruit. There’s **NOTHING** spiritual about **RANDOM**.*

3. Here they are... the 7:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Wake UP | 5. Hold Fast |
| 2. Strengthen What’s Struggling | 6. Repent (Rethink) |
| 3. Finish What You Start | 7. Turn Towards Jesus in EVERYTHING |
| 4. Go Back to the Basics | |

6. **Counsel:** (v3 *If you don’t wake up, I will come to you suddenly, as unexpected as a thief..*)

1. What does this mean?

1. Honestly, I don’t fully know... but it doesn’t sound like a lyric to pop worship song...
2. It doesn’t sound good...

2. One author writes, *“History shows that on two separate occasions, when enemy armies had surrounded Sardis, her careless guards fell asleep. Each time, the opposing army slipped in and captured the*

embarrassed city. Jesus seems to be using this example to teach this church a great truth. If we do not return to worshiping, believing, and living the way we once did, we will not recognize the prophetic signs of his coming.”

3. Life Application Bible Commentary *Only a change of heart could save them from punishment. That would mean taking God’s Word seriously and purposefully obeying it. If they refused to wake up and see what was happening to them, Christ would come like a thief, unexpectedly, as had the soldiers who had climbed the walls to capture the city. The soldiers had brought destruction; Christ would bring punishment, giving them what they deserved.*
4. Here’s what I hear... if you’re dead... there’s hope... you’re not CANCELLED by JESUS... but if you won’t wake up... strengthen... finish what you start... there’s consequence...

7. Comfort:

1. **4** *“Yet there are some in the church in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes with evil. They will walk with me in white, for they are worthy. 5 All who are victorious will be clothed in white...”*
 1. I love how Jesus uses what they’re familiar with to connect... remember Sardis is known for trade/garments...
 2. He says, they’re some who are walking with me... they’re clothes are clean... and the description of the relationship is so beautiful... they’re “walking” with me... relationship/intimacy
 3. Life as it’s meant to be lived — TO THE FULLEST — is found in walking with Jesus.
2. *I will never erase their names from the Book of Life, but I will announce before my Father and his angels that they are mine. 6 “Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches.”*
 1. Weirsbe *“The statement about the names being blotted out would also be significant to people in the Roman Empire, where citizenship was vitally important ... It would appear that God’s “Book of Life” contains the names of all the living... As unbelievers die, their names are removed from the book; thus, at the final judgment, the book contains only the names of believers...”*
 2. Simply put... walking with Jesus brings confidence ... I’m in the book... I know Jesus... & He knows me.
3. Jesus closes this letter, as He often does with these letters to the churches... *if you have ears to hear...*
 1. Isn’t that often the challenge...
 2. Are you open to what God is saying or is your life so full of stuff that doesn’t matter that you can’t hear/see what God is wanting to do in your life?

CONCLUSION:

1. Sardis Church was dead... but not cancelled...
2. Jesus... well... **JESUS LOVES CHURCH... HIS LOVE... is Revealed** & gives Sardis a pathway forward:
 1. Wake UP
 2. Strengthen What's Struggling
 3. Finish What You Start
 4. Go Back to the Basics
 5. Hold Fast
 6. Repent (Rethink)
 7. Turn Towards Jesus in EVERYTHING
3. Gives a **WARNING** to the pretenders & a **WELCOMED** promise to those who are persevering

APPLICATION:

1. Now is the time to get **REAL** with God.
2. Don't live for your **REPUTATION**... **LIVE** for your integrity/character/authenticity before God
3. Sardis **APPEARED** to have it together... Jesus sees everything & gives a clear pathway forward to experience **HIS** life, goodness, & grace... go for it...
 1. Wake UP
 2. Strengthen What's Struggling
 3. Finish What You Start
 4. Go Back to the Basics
 5. Hold Fast
 6. Repent (Rethink)
 7. Turn Towards Jesus in EVERYTHING

EXHORTATION: This Spring, as we **GATHER** on Sundays & **GROUP** together during the week may we continue to **LEARN** & **LIVE** this truth that **JESUS LOVES CHURCH** ... so may be those who simply **LOVE JESUS** and **LOVE HIS PEOPLE!**