

EP40 Revelation 3:1-6 P3

The Church at Sardis

Overall Theme: Spiritual Delusion=Death

Revelation 3:1-6

To the angel of the church in Sardis write: He who is now having the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars, says this: 'I know your deeds, that you now have a name that you are now alive, but you are now dead. 'Now choose to be waking up (or watching), and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds ever having been made complete in the sight of My God. Now, remember what you have received and heard; and now keep it, and repent. Therefore, if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you. 'But you now have a few names in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white, for they are now worthy. 'He who is now overcoming will thus choose to be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. 'He who is now having an ear, is commanded to hear what the Spirit now says to the churches.'

In our last 2 podcasts what we learned is that this grand church with such a grand reputation for being alive is dead and dying. Simply said, **NONE** of their works were rooted in Christ, they were not His works—none of them! In our last podcast we struggled with the question:

How is it Possible?

What about all their prayers to God and all the times they sought His will? What about all their teaching and study and their “love” and service of others in their body and surrounding community—all of which garnished them such a great name?

Having such a lofty reputation for being alive, they had to be seeking God and seeking His blessing over their lives, probably even with fasting. How is it possible for a church to have **NONE** of their works—**NONE—ZERO**—authorized by the Father, led by the Holy Spirit, nor performed by Jesus living in them? For most of us, this is simply an incomprehensible concept.

**THE MIND-NUMBING IMPLICATION OF THE TRUTH THAT “ONLY GOD IS GOOD”¹ IS
THAT ALL OUR WORKS WHICH ARE NOT AUTHORIZED BY THE FATHER NOR
PERFORMED BY THE SON THROUGH THE SPIRIT OF GOD, ARE LAWLESS, EVIL, AND
WORTHLESS REGARDLESS OF THEIR IMPACT ON THIS WORLD AND THEIR IMPACT ON
THE LIVES OF THE HURTING AND THE NEEDY.**

¹ Mark 10:18; Luke 18:19

MINISTRY OUTCOME MAY NOT EQUATE TO A JESUS OUTCOME, BUT TO A BIG BUBBLE OF DELUSION WRAPPED ALL AROUND OUR RELIGIOUS INSTINCTUAL WISDOM.

And sadly, what we learned in our last podcast is that much of the foundation upon which many “believers” have built their lives is cracked by the lies they have believed within the religion of Christianity. Thus, the big, tall walls of their goodness and ministry mindset, which they have identified themselves with, is a delusion that will lead to their being ransacked and destroyed.

The Spirit therefore encouraged them as follows: *“now remember what you have heard and keep it...”*

An Example: The Church of Colossi

By way of example of what it means to *“now remember what we have heard and keep it,”* Paul writes the church at Colossi, and he expresses this same idea, stating that they **heard**, and that they are **now keeping** it and bearing **“good”** fruit, the fruit of believing by faith, relying only on the grace of God for their goodness.

Colossians 1:3-12

We **now** give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, **now** praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the *agape* love which you **now** have for all the saints; because of the hope **now** being laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel which has **now** been coming to you, just as in all the world also it is **now** bearing fruit and **now** increasing, *even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it* **and understood the grace of God in truth**; just as you learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow bond-servant, who is a faithful servant of Christ on our behalf, and he also informed us of your *agape* love in the Spirit.

For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we **now** choose to not cease to **now** be praying for you and to **now** choose to be asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, **now** bearing fruit in every good work and **now being caused to be** increasing in the knowledge of God; **now being caused to be** strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously **now** giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light.

They heard and understood the grace of God in truth: our need to be 100% dependent upon all that He gives to us all the time. As a result, they were constantly bearing good fruit (the fruit that comes from the Spirit of God) because they were rooted in *agape* love (in the Spirit).

So, it is possible for us to live a life rooted in the Spirit where we remember what we have heard and now keep it. The Colossians did it.

Repent Reprised

*“So, now remember what you have received and heard; and now keep it, and **repent.**”* Once again, this

command to repent is a command to change how we think about all these things, especially about our strong walls of good religious deeds. But that change only can happen when we are **willing** to let God change what we believe about all our church worthy deeds, and what we believe about our need to be dependent upon Jesus for **ALL** things **ALL** the time.

However, this is a lifestyle change.² God is asking us to turn and go in a completely different direction than the path we have been on, keeping in mind that repentance is not a reaction, but a chosen response in a fixed direction based on transformed thoughts which are rooted in the truth.

Thus, repentance is not prayers of remorse and regret nor is it even associated with any act of penance, grief, shame, or regret. It is a command to now be believing the truth and to bet our lives upon that truth.

Many, oh so many, have heard this command and have read this passage, yet they still pursue their **church worthy** deeds because they do not now have ears to hear what the Spirit is now saying to the churches. And why might that be?

Simply said, people get a lot out of ministry. They receive acceptance, validation, encouragement, and it gives them purpose and intention for their lives. For some, it even gives them fame and fortune and a sense of worldly security. Ministry opens doors to fun and adventure, to exploration, to important and special people, and to creating meaningful relationships. It gives people an opportunity to belong, and to use their gifts and their talents to see and be seen. Ministry is a path to doing and seeing so much good done in the lives of needy people, the world over. As such, ministry is a powerful drug, and many are addicted to the wine of the passion of its immorality and sensuality.

Accordingly, we must be **willing** to let God change what we believe about all our church worthy deeds, and what we believe about our need to be dependent upon Jesus for **ALL** things **ALL** the time.

Behold I Will Come

Revelation 3:3

Therefore, if you do not wake up (or keep watch), I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you.

This statement is clearly a play on those who scaled the great walls of Sardis in the dark of the night and attacked the city and slaughtered everyone, while those who should have been awake and keeping guard were asleep. The message this statement contains is harrowing, and few understand it much less believe it could apply to them. This is a huge, massive **WARNING**.

There are multiple passages in the **Codex**, using similar nomenclature of the hour, day, the thief, and the call to be awake and ready. And we must turn to the **Codex** to truly understand the depth, meaning, and implication of this statement, especially regarding its timing. And just to be clear, this statement is significantly different than what He said to those at Pergamum. He told them that He "*now chooses to*

² "repent" is rendered in the *aorist active imperative*

come quickly.”³It was something He was doing **in the now**, not later. Whereas, in this **WARNING** He promises that He **will come**, rendered in the *future active indicative*.

In short, the implication is that while they are hiding behind their tall and steep walls of ministry (“**church worthy**” deeds), delusional in their belief that they are safe and protected, He will come to them desiring to thief or to take away all that He wants from their lives. But instead of their being awake and ready for Him to come, they will be asleep and not even know that He had been there.

The result being that they will **NOT** be those who are “*now believing*,” and when He does come for His Chosen ones, and they will find themselves on the other side of the rapture suffering through the day of the **Lord’s Wrath**. And yes, this **WARNING** and the **Day of Wrath** are intricately connected.

The Connected Codex

Let’s dive into the **Codex** to see if we can unpack this statement. And bear in mind, this is **NOT** a word for unbelievers. It is a word for believers to not fall asleep in the arrogance of self-sufficiency and the so called “good works” of religion (all our own high walls). We are to wake up, be sober, alert, and always watchful of that incessant and deathly foe.

First and foremost, this passage is directly drawn from **Revelation 16:15**. Therefore, we must look to that part of the **End Times** narrative to understand why this statement to the Sardinians functions as such a huge **WARNING**.

The Time of Wrath (Revelation 16:15)

At this part of the narrative, six bowls of **wrath** have been poured upon the earth; the 7th is about to be poured out upon the earth. Satan, the Beast, and the False prophet prepare for Armageddon. They gather the kings of the whole world for war, and then suddenly, right before we are told the location of that great gathering, Jesus disrupts the narrative and inserts what can only be described as some sort of **Public Service Announcement** that temporarily interrupts our scheduled programming.

This Public Service Announcement is not only disruptive to the flow of the narrative, but it also stands out in such a way that it does not seem to fit the context. It seems completely out of place in terms of the timeline of the **End Times** narrative.

“Behold, I choose to now come like a thief. Blessed is the one who is now staying awake and now keeping his clothes, so that he will not now walk about naked, and men will not now see his shame.”

Deep into the unveiling of the time of His great **wrath**, Jesus interrupts the storyline and gives this **WARNING** so we would all know, before that fateful day of wrath arrives, that there is **NO** protection from the day of wrath for those in the household of God who take a stand on their own good works, the **church worthy** deeds which they have done for God—deeds not completed in the presence of God.

Though seemingly out of place, the imagery should draw everyone back to what He told those in Sardis.

“Therefore, if you do not wake up (or keep watch), I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you.”

With **Revelation 16:15** being rendered primarily in the *present* tense, it seems that these passages should be flipped around with **Revelation 16:15** coming first and **Revelation 3:3**, which is rendered

³ **Revelation 2:16**

primarily in the *future* tense, coming second. But that is not the case.

Revelation 16:15 states what He does and what He expects of those in His household.

Revelation 3:3 states the terrible end of those who do not heed the **WARNING**.

Like a Thief

In **Revelation 16:15**, Jesus says, “*I now choose to come like a thief.*”⁴ The inference is that Jesus even now comes with the clear intention to plunder and to possess that which does not belong to Him, just like a thief. He comes to dispossess.

Fiction Alert

FICTION ALERT

Many have taken this reference to a “*thief*” and have proposed that this somehow speaks of a sudden event, claiming that thieves tend to do their thieving in sudden and unexpected manner. Therefore, they have decided to tie this passage to the rapture event. Their reasoning goes something like this: Jesus is coming like a thief, so He must be coming silently and surreptitiously. They conclude that since he comes like a thief, no one can know when that event will happen. Thus, they reason that His coming must occur before any of the traceable events of the Tribulation, or else we would be able to somewhat determine the timing of His coming.

But with this passage in **Revelation 16:15** being rendered in the *present* tense, the **Code** does not allow for that **fiction**.

Many thieves, good thieves, work slowly, methodically, with much planning, analysis, preparation, and they tend to be very strategic in terms of the **day** or **hour** that they dispossess their victims of their property. The suddenness of their actions depends on how much time they have available to do their thieving. In some instances, they have lots of time and in others, not so much. For instance, when a homeowner goes on vacation, a thief may have weeks or months to perform their dirty deed. Truth be told, “suddenness” is not much of a factor to a thief, at least not in the same way that it is to a robber.

If the timing or the surprise of an event was at issue, Jesus would have probably said that He comes like a robber. Robber is a completely different Greek word that would communicate more of a surprise factor to its actions, as a robber wants to take their victim by surprise because they are literally robbing a person of their possessions.⁵ In such face-to-face encounters, surprise, stealth, and suddenness is necessary to be effective.

Therefore, the imposition of “suddenness” into **Revelation 16:15** is misleading and misdirected. It also ignores the fact that the **Code** is not pointing forward to some future event, but it is addressing what happens even **now**. “*Behold, I choose to now come like a thief.*”

⁴ “I am coming” is rendered in the *present middle indicative*

⁵ Greek word for thief is “*kleptes*” and the Greek word for robber is “*lestes*”

What is He Thieving?

So, what is He **now** thieving? There are related passages in the **Codex** that will help us understand this with a bit more clarity.

Matthew 24:42-44

Therefore, **now** stay awake, for you do not know on what **day** your Lord chooses to **now** come. But know this, that if the master of the house **had known** in what part of the night the thief **now** chooses to come, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore, you also must **now** choose to be ready, for the Son of Man chooses to **now** come at an hour you do **not now** expect.

Luke 11:21-22

When a strong man, fully armed, **now** guards his own house, what he is **now** possessing are **now** undisturbed. But when someone stronger than he attacks him and overpowers him, he **now** takes away from him all his armor on which he had relied and **now** distributes his plunder.

Matthew 12:29

Or how can anyone **now** enter the strong man's house and carry off his property, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house.

In these passages, Jesus is the **thief**, and He operates in the **now** (always rendered in the *present* tense) The **master** of the house is the enemy working through and with our Old Sinful Nature, the *flesh*. He is a guardian (the strongman) protecting this space. Each of us, as individuals, are the **house** that is ruled by the strongman—the rule of which Jesus wants to dispossess.

Jesus chooses to come like a thief. In other words, He comes to plunder. He comes with the pre-determined intention to steal what the **strongman** has ruled, possessed, and guarded in our lives.

He Comes at Night

And He comes like a thief in the **night**, at an **hour** we do not expect. The imagery here is unbelievably amazing and should greatly encourage our souls. Viewed through the lens of the **Code**, this does not speak of the “suddenness” of the event nor of the literal nighttime, but the fact that He comes in the hour when we need Him the most, which just so happens to also be the hour in which we tend to think He is less likely to come—**at night**.

When we are in the darkness of night, in other words, when we are given over to our *flesh* and to sin and the ways of the enemy have consumed us, just like the night which overtakes the day, Jesus comes to set us free from all that keeps us from now believing. His intent is to deliver us from **wrath**—these are all things that He chooses to **now** be doing in our lives (more on this later).

Jesus never waits for us to get things right, to be good, and to make the gut level choice to dwell in the

light and walk in the day. Rather, He comes to bring the light of the rising sun, into our lives.⁶ He comes when we need Him the most, when we are the most vulnerable, in the depth of our dark night overcome with guilt, fear, failure, shame, and so many other things for which we do not think God will come for us. After all, when we are living in the darkness of night, we tend to think that we should have somehow done it better, and therefore, we need to get our act right before we can come to God. The thought that God would come to us in those times is scarcely imaginable.

We have the entire thing upside down and backwards! He comes to us in our **now.**

When we have given ourselves over to the darkness of night, the strongman thinks he has won, thinks he has us under his thumb, and is convinced that he rules our house. As such, he is not ready to be invaded and dispossessed by someone who is much stronger than him.

It may not be clear at first, but this is wonderful news. Even **now** Jesus comes to evict this foe from our premises, from every room in which he squats. If we let Him, Jesus will attack and overcome the strongman, bind him, take away all the armor that he uses to protect and secure the house (all the wrong belief and unbelief that empowers the enemy), and then He will plunder all that He wants from our lives. With that said, He does not take it all in one visit or one invasion, but once the strongman is removed, He comes over time to complete His work. Jesus is the great dispossessor!

And since He **now comes**, we can be confident that He wants us to be **willing** to let Him in and do His thieving. In fact, we will find out in the letter to the church at Laodicea, that He stands at the door and knocks ready for us to let Him come into our space and plunder what the enemy has possessed.

If we let Him in, overtime, and after much plundering, He will cause us to be safe and secure in Him, rescued from **wrath**. But take note, if we have given up, given in, are asleep and not watching, and have shed the clothes of His righteousness (the white robes He give us) for our own sullied black garments, then when He comes, we will not be prepared for His invasion into our lives. He may be at the door knocking, but we will not be listening. Most likely, we are not even aware that we are in the need of a good plundering, as we are far too busy with all our “**church worthy**” deeds.

Combining both **WARNINGS** of **Revelation 3:3** and **16:15**, Jesus says, “*Blessed is the one who is now staying awake and now keeping his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked, and men will not now see his shame.*” “*Therefore, it you do not wake up (or keep watch), I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you.*”

The implication is that those who love their own goodness and hide behind their tall steep walls of “**church worthy**” deeds, will be those who are asleep when He chooses to come. They will not let Him disposes from their lives the strongman and all the plunder that he wants out of the house. Simply said, they will not end up being those who are **now** believing.

Left Naked

As a result, they will find themselves on the other side of the rapture, deep within the time of the Lord’s Great **wrath**. They will walk about naked, and men will see their shame. This is another way of saying that all their great preaching and blah blah blah about Jesus and salvation and church, and ministry, and gifts, and so on will come back to mock them, for none of it saved them from the time of **wrath**.

⁶ See **Romans 5:8**

Rather, it just sealed them in their shame, and everyone who is still around will see it and know it.

BUT WAIT, that can't be right. What about the promise that Christians are not appointed to **wrath** and the promise that they will be saved or rescued from the **wrath** to come? Great question. Thank you for asking.

Fiction Alert

Saved From the Wrath to Come

FICTION ALERT

Jesus declared to those in Thyatira that Jezebel and her children will be thrown on a bed of **Great Tribulation**. This judgment had both near term and **End Times** implications. Likewise, He declares the same **WARNING** to those in Sardis. The language is different, but the implication is the same. They will be left behind and find themselves smack dab in the center of the day of the **Lord's Wrath**.

If they do not wake up and strengthen the things that remain, and if they fail to remember what they received, and heard, and keep it and repent (as a matter of lifestyle), they will **NOT** know when He comes to do the work in their life that is necessary for them to ultimately be saved from the **wrath** to come.

And we must keep in mind, Jesus is talking to good church folk, people who believe they have been serving God faithfully as good Christians. These are those who are beyond confident in their "golden ticket" to heaven because they said the "sinner's prayer," and are otherwise considered by the many to be "sons" of God; after all, they have a great reputation for being alive. They believe they are part of the masses who will get raptured (most of them believing they will be raptured before the Tribulation even begins), and they could hardly imagine any other outcome.

It is no wonder that their eternity will be marked by an existence of wailing and gnashing of teeth.

This is extremely hard to accept, since practically everyone is convinced that this cannot be talking about them, but someone else. After all, our religious **fictions** have told us that it is not possible for someone who has prayed the "sinner's prayer" and served God so faithfully with all those **church worthy** deeds to go through the dreaded time of the Lord's **Wrath**. According to the traditional translations of the **Codex** even, we are told that believers are not appointed to wrath and that Jesus promises to save them from the wrath to come.⁷ So why am I once again talking like a crazy heretic claiming fiction, fiction, fiction?

Well, this is a very complex topic and one that is fraught with a lot of emotion. It is also a topic that, along with other **fictions** about the tribulation and the time of the Lord's wrath, undergirds the **fictional** pre-tribulation rapture theory. Therefore, we will have to wait until the next Podcast to compete this thought about "being saved from the wrath to come."

⁷ 1 Thessalonians 5:9, 1:10

