

Wake Up!

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[0 : 0 0] uh well as you are seated please grab your bibles and turn back to revelation chapter 3 i'll also put the verses on the screen for those online as well well i wonder if you've heard of the kids group the wiggles has anyone heard the wiggles yeah some people have if you've uh had to babysit grandchildren or nieces and nephews little ones uh it's uh it's a really good thing to know about because it's can save your life uh so the wiggles our kids used to enjoy listening to some of their songs and watching them on the on the screen and so on and one of their songs was one called wake up jeff have a listen wake up jeff everybody's wiggling wake up jeff we really need you wake up jeff you're missing all the fun now wake up jeff before the day's through pretty pretty catchy isn't it we do have a couple of jeffs here but i think they're both away um yeah now um what's the wiggles got to do with revelation you might be thinking well jesus says today to sardis not wake up jeff but wake up sardis you see verse two there he says wake up and in verse three he gives a warning if they don't wake up and today jesus says wake up sardis because it seems they had grown spiritually lethargic to the point of falling asleep on the job of being christian in fact their christianity had gone into such deep hibernation that jesus says they were a church in name only and actually dead inwardly point one verse one so he begins by saying to the angel of the church and sardis write these are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of god and the seven stars now before we get to the name only bit jesus reminds them that he holds the seven stars in his hand you might remember the seven stars from chapter one represent the seven angels that are for the different seven churches i could refer to it angelic heavenly being but the word angel can also mean messenger so perhaps it's talking about the seven messengers whom the letters are written to and who will read them out in the churches and so it could be saying in verse one to the messenger of the church in sardis right and then they will read it out either way the number seven talks about completeness not just because there's literally seven but seven also represents fullness or completeness and he holds them all in other words in his hand and so also seven spirits seven refers to fullness or completeness and having the complete spirit well there's only one complete spirit isn't there the holy spirit he has the holy spirit in his hand ready to send to their aid to help if they wake up and ask for it and they need to do that because in the rest of verse one he says i know your deeds you have a reputation of being alive but you are dead it doesn't get much blunter than that does it it seems their deeds had given them a reputation or literally a name for being spiritually alive in the world's eyes when they're actually spiritually dead in god's eyes perhaps like some churches today with numerous members amazing music a wonderful website even attracting celebrities they seem spiritually alive on the outside

but jesus says they're actually spiritually dead on the inside in verse two he'll say that their deeds are unfinished before god they've in other words fallen asleep and stopped doing the deeds that really matter to god god doesn't really care about a wonderful website they're helpful but he cares about genuine love and faith and not just deeds done for show and appearance in fact as i said before the word reputation in verse one literally is the word name they have a name for being alive when they're actually dead here is nominal christianity christianity in name only that's what it means they call themselves christians in name but don't live as genuine christians in life and they look christian on the outside but are not on the inside how did this happen in sardis what led them to be a church in name only well it seems sardis was a comfortable place to live which led them to being complacent you see sardis was a wealthy city gold was found there in fact it was the first city to mint gold and silver coins like this gold coin from sardis on the screen plus it also sat on the junction of five roads which meant they got lots of business from all the travelers who would stop and buy things at sardis here is a picture of the shops to orientate you the dirt roads where the sellers would walk along and they'd have seen little kind of brick alcoves they're the different shops as you went along that kind of dirt streets there and so it was a wealthy city it was also a newly renovated city by the time of revelation in 17 ad there was a massive earthquake which destroyed the city and then emperor tiberius rebuilt the whole thing at cost to rome not sardis and so this city had that new car smell you know it smells it had that new house look it even came with all the mod cons like a gym and sauna well not sauna but baths you can see the gym in the background at the top of the screen but here's a better picture of it that's what it looked like and then on the inside that sunken bit in the middle where the grass is well that was your 50 meter swimming pool there you could do laps in so it had its own aquarina if you like so it was wealthy renovated had all the mod cons it was a comfortable place to live you see and what's more there's no mention in this particular letter to sardis of persecution there's no persecution for this church like there was for so many others mentioned and so it seems even for christians it was a comfortable place to live but the danger with comfort is that it can lead us to being complacent with christ and we can enjoy our comfort so much so that we forget or fall asleep on christ i mean do we tend to forget christ when life is bad and hard or when life is good and easy when is it it's when it's good and easy isn't it because we have no need to cry out for help and we have no need to cling to his promises of a better life to come because well this life is so good and comfortable and so we forget or fall asleep on christ

comfort can make us complacent to the point that we claim to be christian with our mouths but end up denying him with our lives comfort complacent denying christ and christian in name only spiritually dead inwardly that's the trajectory my in-laws uh live in a comfortable part of the world called jeringong on the south coast of new south wales uh it's very hills and it overlooks the ocean um it's kind of like a the beachside town of apollo bay only warmer i know i was there the other week it's freezing down there but some years ago i remember my father-in-law telling me about an outreach program that their church in jeringong was running to help people hear about jesus and have the certain hope of heaven but they were finding it hard to get people to help you know man a store in the marketplace or hand out things or provide the food that kind of thing they'll find it hard to get people to help and when he spoke to one particular person this is what they said they said why do we need to worry about heaven when we already live in paradise they were so comfortable in their beachside town that it led them to being complacent towards christ and his call to make disciples and if they kept doing that and they probably weren't spiritually dead at that point but if they kept doing that that's what they're in danger of being spiritually dead on the inside and becoming a christian in name only on the outside not being a genuine christian anymore of course we can fall into the same trap of complacency too can't we we may be still spiritually alive on the inside but we can still fall into the trap of letting our comfort make us complacent i found myself doing that when i was on holidays for a moment actually i was enjoying my comfortable holiday and some time passed before i realized i haven't actually you know read my bible for two days what's going on i haven't prayed for a couple of days we still said grace at dinner time every every single meal but it had become for those couple of days a kind of going through the motions it wasn't really heartfelt i kind of fell asleep on christ because my comfortable holiday led me to being complacent how do we do that during the week ourselves now we come to church on sunday go through the motions and then forget about christ all the other days are we in danger of becoming sleepy complacent christians and if that is dangerous because that leads to becoming christians in name only like it did for sardis or on the other side we can choose comfort over christ instead of just kind of becoming complacent and drifting away we can actually deliberately choose comfort over christ after all staying warm in a bed on a cold sunday morning is much more comfortable than coming here at dying a.m. and still early isn't it or rejecting the bible's teaching on certain topics well that'll make life more comfortable with some of our non-christian family friends and work colleagues won't it or ignoring that sin in our lives is much more comfortable than facing up to it and asking for god's help to deal with it or not saying grace at a restaurant because it's embarrassing well that's more comfortable than avoiding that than standing out as different and having people whisper about you are we in danger of choosing comfort over christ whether it's being complacent and sleepy towards christ or whether it's deliberately choosing comfort over christ both those things can lead to

becoming a christian name only and becoming spiritually dead inwardly that's what has happened in sardis and so jesus says wake up sardis point two verse two he says wake up strengthen what remains and is about to die for i have found your deeds unfinished in the sight of my god now dead people i mean he's just said they're dead in verse one dead people can't usually wake up can they but it seems there's still hope for these people it seems as though jesus has got them on life support as it were and so jesus says wake up and strengthen in fact the main command here is actually to strengthen what remains and so what does remain well i take it they're the deeds that are unfinished verse two before god the deeds they started off doing before they became complacent and fell asleep on christ what are these deeds i will back in chapter two verse 19 where he talks about deeds for thyatira last week he unpacks what they are it includes things like love faith service perseverance they started off doing those things but didn't finish them or perhaps they no longer did them genuinely it was just going through the motions and so they're to wake up and strengthen the remnants of those deeds they're to trust in christ genuinely they're to love one another sincerely they're to serve selflessly and not for show they're to persevere ardently because if they don't then even those bits of their those deeds will die out in fact he says they're about to die out you've heard the saying if you don't use it you lose it yeah the more we use or practice love faith service perseverance the stronger it becomes which is why the growing persecution of christians in australia well there's something good about it actually i know that sounds hard to hear but there's something good about it because it actually stops us from being too comfortable prevents us from becoming complacent and falling asleep on christ instead it forces us to choose if we're going to stand up and be known for christ it forces us in other words to practice our faith and perseverance which in turn makes it stronger but if we don't use it we lose it and so sardis doesn't wake up and strengthen the remnants if they don't use it then they will die out completely they'll lose it and perhaps they won't even call themselves christian in name anymore and so you see their very eternity as that is at stake this is so serious that jesus spends the rest of this little letter helping them to wake up and strengthen point three verse three he says remember therefore what you have received and heard hold it fast and repent the word therefore on the screen there or in verse three it really marks a shift in the passage and so i think that's where the new paragraph should really start you see they desperately need to wake up and strengthen therefore says jesus here's some help to do it

so he's shifting from what they have to do to how to help them do it and how do they help do it well firstly remember what you've received and heard what do they receive and hear well the gospel the good news about jesus the good news that jesus is the king who died for our sin to free us from judgment for life with him that's what they're to remember because when we remember what jesus has done for us doesn't it move us to live for him isn't it how it works i mean what other king or leader would die for us other leaders seem to only tax us more there's been lots of complaints this year of increased tax from by the ato or other leaders just cancel the commonwealth games on us is that too soon what other religion offers us hope and help through hardships in life plus a family to be part of plus the guarantee of eternity in true paradise which will be way better than apollo bay that you remember this gospel and verse 3 hold it or keep it and repent of not living in light of it not living for jesus as their king so if you want to help to wake up from spiritual sleepiness then firstly remember the gospel that the good news of jesus really is good news that it really is worth following him even when it's uncomfortable that's the carrot remember the gospel next comes the stick as it were heed the warning and so the second half of verse 3 jesus says but if you do not wake up here's the warning i will come like a thief and you will not know at what time i will come to you this picture of a thief coming at an unexpected time i mean that's what thieves do right they don't come when you're expecting them they come at an unexpected time but this picture is a picture jesus used earlier in the gospels to refer to his return his return to judge where jesus said in matthew's gospel therefore stay awake for you do not know what day your lord is coming it will return and then he uses the thief was coming idea to talk about his return therefore you must also be ready the son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect and this picture should have particularly run true for the city of sardis because something similar had already happened in their history you see the city had a lower level with the shops and the gym and pool that i showed you before but it also had an upper level what's called a citadel or an acropolis and that's the upper level of a city that was built high on top of the mountains that people could retreat to if they were being attacked it's kind of like a castle's keep the top level the inner level if you like and i don't know if you can see but on top of the mountains they've actually built a brick wall here's a closer picture of it it's still here today if you go over there and you can have a look at it but these walls actually made them comfortable so comfortable that they became complacent and no one stood guard and so in 549 BC

[19 : 47] King Cyrus of Persia sent one soldier up the wall he went over opened the gate and he captured the city easy as pie so a soldier came like a thief in the night and captured the city but instead of waking up to this Sardis let it happen again in 216 BC this time by Antiochus the Great he sent a few more men over the wall and they opened the gates and captured the city and so this warning should have hit home for them it happened in their history and so Jesus says wake up Sardis and stay away otherwise not another nation but I will come to you like a thief in the night not to capture but to judge but Jesus doesn't end on the stick he ends with three more carrots or promises the first one in verse 4 to 5 he says 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 the one who is victorious will like them be dressed in white too and now here to have soiled clothes doesn't mean that they've spilt their coffee or lunch down the front of them it's a metaphor for those who have not contaminated themselves with worldly ways you know becoming complacent on Christ and spiritually dead and so on those who have not done that he says will walk with him and be given clothes of white dressed in white white in Revelation stands for purity and since heaven is pure then white clothes are the ones you need to enter and like some restaurants have a dress code you know you've got to wear certain clothes to enter the restaurant or so too does heaven in fact the white clothes are the ones that Jesus himself wore at his transfiguration where he was changed and his true appearance was seen only for us the clothes are made white by his blood late in Revelation it talks about those who persevered through the great tribulation and they have washed their robes and made them white not in Omo or coal power notice but in the blood of Christ and so those who've continued to genuinely trust in Christ those who are Christian inwardly as well as in name well the blood of Christ will give them the right robes they need to enter heaven and the great news here is that there's still time for those in Sardis who have soiled their clothes to have them washed white there's still time for those who are spiritually dead to become spiritually alive there's still time for those who are

Christian in name only to become Christian inwardly for Jesus says the one who is victorious let me put the verse back on the screen verse 5 the one who is victorious the one who wakes up and repents will like those faithful few be dressed in white too they will be given clothes to enter heaven and walk with Christ to enjoy true paradise and not just for a little while but forever and so the rest of verse 5 goes on to say and I will never blot out the name of that person from the book of life we heard about that book in our first reading from Daniel and Jesus says here that he will never blot out our name from the book of life which means our name will always be in the book of life which means we will always have life it's a picture of eternal life isn't it we will enter heaven with white robes and stay forever in paradise and in case that's still not enough motivation to wake up he adds that he will also the rest of verse five acknowledge that name of the person who follows who generally trusts who wakes up he will acknowledge that name before my father and his angels again

Jesus said something similar back in the gospels whoever acknowledges me before others I will also acknowledge before my father in heaven which is a great privilege I mean it's quite nice to be acknowledged by others isn't it you know to be greeted and welcomed by name even or your boss at work saying well done great job you've done well or perhaps acknowledged by your kids or grandkids nieces or nephews who acknowledge you with pride this is my grandpa my grandma my mum dad auntie and uncle you know when they do that I'm still waiting but when they do that you know you're quite chuffed aren't you it's quite an honour well how much more so can you imagine being acknowledged by Christ the king himself can you imagine standing before the awesome throne of God on judgment day with all humanity and Christ the king points to you in front of trillions and says

John is my brother Ro is my sister in front of God what a privilege what an honour and I think Jesus gives this promise about their name at the end because it contrasts with their name at the start remember verse one they had a name or reputation for being alive in the world's eyes but Jesus says if they wake up they'll have a name before God's eyes and he will acknowledge it and which would you rather be acknowledged by the world in its own eyes for a moment of honour and comfort or being acknowledged by Christ in God's eyes for an eternity of sharing in Christ's honour which would you rather and so if you're here today and you perhaps call yourself a Christian but don't really believe everything about Jesus you can't only half believe the gospel you don't want to take

Christianity too seriously you don't really want to make it an all of life thing just an occasional Sunday thing then wake up strengthen what remains before it dies out completely really believe in him who died for you because being a Christian in name only is no Christian at all rather a Christian is one who believes in Jesus genuinely so much so that you seek to live for him in all of life and for us who really do believe then we're to stay awake we're not to become complacent with some sins in our lives because it's more comfortable than dealing with them or we're not to fall asleep to some things we ought to do because it's more comfortable than having to do them rather we're to stay awake seeking not to sin but continuing to live for him even when it's uncomfortable even when it's difficult we're to stay awake and not let comfort make us complacent towards

[27 : 34] Christ it's not always easy so remember the gospel you've received and heard heed the warning that Jesus return in an unexpected time and hear the promises of a white robe to enter heaven of a life forever in a place better than Apollo Bay and of having Christ proudly say to his father this is my brother my sister verse 6 ends whoever has ears let them hear what the spirit says to the churches let's pray we would have ears to hear let's pray a gracious father help us we pray not to be sleepy complacent Christians or Christians in name only but to be genuine Christians inwardly those who stay awake