

EASTER SESSION 6

David Baker, Word for Easter Seminar 2025
Transcription of recording, slightly edited

In this session, I would like to look at the admonition of Jesus to the presbytery and the church in Sardis. In many respects, this is where we are and the Lord is speaking to us, calling us to be awake (as those who are purchasing a double portion of oil), and also those who are clothed in white priestly garments. This is the focus of the admonition to Sardis.

We will begin in Revelation chapter 3 verse 1. Jesus says, 'And to the angel... [speaking to the presbytery of the church, but then also addressing the whole lampstand church] ... to the angel of the church in Sardis, write, "These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and also the seven stars." ' So Christ possesses the seven Spirits of God and He is calling every presbytery to walk with Him in the fellowship of His offering journey.

We know that He, by Eternal Spirit, offered Himself to God. When you are looking at the offering of Christ, He is offering Himself to God. Then from Gethsemane to the cross He endures those seven wounding events. Each wounding event was a birth pain, and it was also the lighting of a lamp revealing the sevenfold Spirit of God. So at the end of His offering journey, He was fully revealed as the glorified Son of Man and the Light of the world.

He is inviting every presbytery to walk with Him (every presbyter and every individual son of God) to walk with Him on that offering journey by the same capacity of Eternal Spirit. Every presbytery is called to manifest the sevenfold Spirit of God as they walk among a lampstand church. Every lampstand then is called to reveal the seven Spirits of God once the Father takes His seat and Christ opens the seals. With the first seal, the gospel of the kingdom is proclaimed as a testimony in all nations. Those seven Spirits

are then sent into all the earth. That is the light to the nations. So Christ is addressing a church here, and He is calling them to walk with Him. That is His goal. They are called to walk with Him in white priestly garments. He says, 'I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.' He is speaking to a whole lampstand church, and He is calling them all to join the same offering; the same fellowship; to reveal the same light; the same ministry.

Then He is identifying that He is talking to a group, and there are three subsets to the church that He is addressing. He says that there is a group who are spiritually dead; and then He says there is also a group who are spiritually asleep, and they are at risk of spiritually dying; and then there is also a group (a few names) who are worthy because they have not soiled their priestly garments. Let us pick up what He is saying to each of these groups.

He starts with the group who are spiritually dead and says, 'I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.' The group who was spiritually dead had previously been born as sons of God. The seed, the unique seed, their name, it was begotten in their spirit, and they are a son of God - they are alive. Then because of carnality and setting their mind on the things of the flesh, that life (that little immature plant) died. 'You have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.' Paul said that if you live according to the flesh, you will die. Rom 8:13. That is the lesson of the parable of the seed and the Sower. If we are not learning obedience in the fellowship of Christ's offering, then we will lose our sonship. The stony ground is telling us that you can lose it because of disobedience, which is caused by becoming offended, or you can lose it in terms of the thorny ground. The reason for your disobedience is that it is choked by the

cares of this world or the desire for other things - the deceitfulness of riches. Whatever the cause or factor is, the result is that the seed (the life) dies. 'You have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.' When the plant (a son of God dies), they will often then regress to becoming wayside ground. You have a lot of wayside ground that has never been born in any congregation. There is no illumination; there is no life there; just religious people who enjoy the community of the church or whatever the case may be. You have also those who *were* born but have died. They have regressed to being wayside ground but are still sitting in a congregation. Jesus is saying here that this group was still in the church. That is the interesting point. We are not talking about an 'Esau dynamic' here that has gone out. He is talking to a group that are still in the church, and they are maintaining a religious projection within the community of the church. Perhaps they are living in the afterglow of a previous experience - but motivated by the fear of death and searching for some assurance of salvation. This group may well be busy with a lot of works - a lot of religious works looking for assurance. Jesus says, 'I know your works.' I am looking at your works and I am discerning the heart, and I am judging your deeds, and I know that they are not the works that I finished for you. That is not the expression of your sonship. The seed has died. All these religious works are motivated by your own other law. It is your own conscience bearing witness according to the knowledge of good and evil. 'I know your works.'

We will go to verse 2, moving to the next group. Jesus says, 'Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect or complete before God.' This is a different group now; they are not already dead. This is a spiritually asleep group that needs to be woken up because they are at risk of dying. We just note that distinction.

They are ready to die, not already dead, but at risk of dying. 'Be watchful.' That word means 'wake up' and 'keep awake'. Wake up - be illuminated by what the Spirit is saying to the churches and then having woken up, stay awake. 'Be watchful.' Watch. We know that Jesus used many different parables to emphasise the need for us to be awake, to be watchful and to be ready for His coming. One of those parables (which we have done a number of times in the last couple of years) really highlights this principle and emphasises the need to be awake, watching and ready for His coming. It is the parable of the wise and the foolish virgins.

We will go to Matthew 25, and we will read the first seven verses here to refresh ourselves. I think we are all very familiar with this parable by this stage. In Matthew 25 verse 1 Jesus begins, 'Then [or at that time] the kingdom of heaven shall be like... [He is talking about the time when the Father takes His seat. At that time or] ...then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins.'

Now we know these are not bridesmaids; they are all part of the bride of Christ and so this will have an application for individuals; it will have an application for households; it will have an application for whole congregations. Paul said to the Corinthians that he had betrothed them to Christ as a chaste virgin. 2Co 11:2. I will highlight on the way through that not every virgin is 'chaste' in terms of a congregation or a household or an individual. Paul had betrothed the Corinthians to Christ to be a chaste virgin. An 'elect lady' would be the other term the Scripture uses to describe a chaste virgin.

We have 10 virgins here, all called to be part of the bride, part of the bride city, 'who took their lamps and went out'. Now the first question we ask is, 'Where are they coming out *from*?' They went out. They went out from somewhere. Where did they go out from? They went out from their houses. We are looking at houses in a city here -

belonging to the bride city and they are going out from their houses. They are going out 'to meet the Bridegroom. Now five of them were wise and five were foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.' We are noting the distinction here: The foolish have oil in their lamp; the wise have oil in their lamp, but also in their vessel. The wise virgins have a double portion of oil. Verses 5 to 6: 'But while the Bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight a cry was heard: "Behold, the Bridegroom is coming; go out to meet Him!" Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps.'

Then we have the discussion between the wise and the foolish virgins and they are not able to share oil, etc. When we first read this parable (we are all very familiar with this parable now) it appears (because Jesus really launches into action) at the time that the Father takes His seat that the virgins all preemptively for some reason go out (they go out from their houses to meet the Bridegroom), but then they find themselves waiting. We are not quite sure where they are waiting (in some public place or something), and then they are all falling asleep. [We see] pictures of virgins leaning up against buildings and falling asleep and their lamps on the ground next to them, trying to illustrate this point of them all going out and then being disappointed - waiting, falling asleep. Then a word comes to wake them up. A lot of commentators really focus on the fact that you have wise virgins falling asleep so they can pick it up and say, 'This is a great encouragement to us all. We can all fall asleep from time to time and still be wise in the end.' It is encouraging. You can get away with a few seasons of spiritual apathy or whatever the case may be. I do not think that that is the major focus of this parable. In fact, Jesus discounts that completely when He summarises the whole thing in one sentence, in verse 13. This is His summing up. What is

the purpose of this parable? Let us keep this in view. He says, 'Watch.' That is literally, 'Wake up and keep awake.' 'Watch, therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.' That is what we have just sung. It actually encapsulates everything that I am saying here beautifully. The key to understanding the sequence of this parable is to ask the question, 'Why did the virgins go out to meet the Bridegroom?' That is often the question we do not ask, but it is good to ask that. Why did they go out? Now the reason they went out of their houses to meet the Bridegroom was because they heard the word which definitively said to them, 'Behold, the Bridegroom is coming! Go out to meet Him.'

I do not think they are going out and then waiting and then going out again. I think there is a word coming and they are responding to a word in obedience and going out to meet the Bridegroom. That is the key for understanding the sequence as we read this parable. In verses 1 to 4, Jesus is saying what will happen when the Father takes His seat. We are going to have five wise and five foolish. Let us launch right at the key point, right into the action. He is keeping everyone interested right from the beginning of the parable.

We are going to launch right into it and that is where we will see the distinction. '[At that time or] Then the kingdom of heaven will be like...' Then He goes back to verse 5, having said that this is going to be the outcome. Let us go back and show what happened in the lead up to this event. I am sure you have all seen a movie where it just launches into the action and that has caught your attention right from the beginning. Then you get a little something on the screen that says five years earlier or ten years earlier. I do not know what the time frame is here, but we have 'some time earlier'. We have our 10 virgins - five are wise, five foolish. Sometime earlier, where were they all? They were all

asleep. That is where the action begins. Jesus picks it up from there and we catch up to when the Father takes His seat. Then we have the discussion between the wise and the foolish. When you are reading this parable, it works seamlessly if you pick up verses 5 to 7 and drop them at the front, if you want to read it in its sequence. Pick up verses 5 to 7, drop them at the front. Verse 4 then goes straight to verse 8. Verse 4: 'But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.' We have a distinction. Then we have the discussion between them about the oil. I am saying that to orientate ourselves here.

The simple point that I am trying to discount here is that the wise virgins fall asleep. It says point blank, 'They all fell asleep.' What that means is that the wise virgins *do not begin as wise*. When they are asleep, they are not wise virgins. We are winding the clock back a bit to say, 'What is happening in the lead up? They are all asleep.' We begin with 10 foolish virgins, or we have 10 sleepy virgins. Then a word comes, and the thing that is distinguishing the wise and the foolish is the response to the word that is coming prior to the Father taking His seat, and the command to go out and meet Him. The simple point is that the wise virgins were not initially wise. The parable begins with 10 unwise virgins - it says *all* of them. They were all spiritually asleep for they were not ready for the Father to take His seat and for the coming of the Bridegroom, until the word came to wake them up from their spiritual slumber.

There are many seasons of this, but I am sure we can all reflect. I can certainly reflect in terms of my family and say, 'Going back to COVID, there we are as a family in our household asleep, until the Lord used those events to come in and shake us a little bit - to wake us up.' The thing that is really waking us up is the word that is coming to us in that season saying, 'Awake from sleep!' The Lord was waking us up to what the restoration of first love looks like in terms of

the fellowship of the *agape* meal. He is still illuminating us to that, but hopefully we are awake, continuing to receive illumination. It was not that long ago, that I would certainly reflect and say, 'I was asleep.' The Lord comes to wake us up from sleep.

It was the nature then of the response to the word that determined whether each virgin remained foolish or became wise. You have your wise virgins. The Lord shakes them, and they wake up. They are beginning to listen to what the Lord is saying and sort of shaking the foolish ones. The alarm is going off and they are hitting 'snooze' a few times. (I will not ask who feels convicted on that this morning.) The alarm goes off and they hit 'snooze'; then it goes off again and they hit 'snooze'. We know they eventually wake up. They are taking a bit longer to wake up and register what the Lord is saying. It is the nature of our response and the timeliness of our response that will determine in the end whether we are wise or foolish. I think the events get to a pitch when everyone is awake, but we do need to respond when the Lord is speaking to us.

The mandate to announce the coming of the Bridegroom belongs to the Elijah ministry. We know that the Elijah ministry is being restored to 'turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, the children to the fathers, the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the coming of the Lord.' Luk 1:17.

The Lord has been restoring the Elijah ministry, and we know that John the Baptist exemplified this in his day. He ministered in the spirit and power of Elijah, and he described himself by saying that he was the 'friend of the Bridegroom'. He rejoiced because he heard the voice of the Bridegroom. He then proclaims a message that was making the people ready in that day for the coming of Christ.

We have the ministry of Elijah in our day, rejoicing to hear the voice of the Bridegroom

as Christ is speaking to His lampstand churches. As the apostle John said, 'What we have seen and heard we proclaim to you, so that you may have fellowship with us and our fellowship is with the Father and the Son.' He is saying that our 'joy is full' in this fellowship. 1Jn 1:3. John the Baptist said the same thing in John 3:29. 'He who has the bride is the Bridegroom; but the friend of the Bridegroom, who stands and hears Him, rejoices greatly because of the Bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled.' That was in his day.

We have a fullness of joy in our day. The Elijah ministry is restored before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord, when the Father will take His seat. The word that belongs to the Elijah ministry will be proclaimed as we pick up this statement in the parable. I do not think it is just one command. The word that belongs to the Elijah ministry will be proclaimed. I think it is a whole season and seasons of the word coming. The ministry of Elijah (the word that belongs to the Elijah ministry) will be proclaimed in a progressive way that is consistent with the sovereign times and seasons of the Lord. If we reflect on where we are now, we are most certainly hearing the word, 'Behold, the Bridegroom is coming.' We are not yet hearing the word, 'Go out to meet Him!' In fact, the Lord is saying, 'Stay in your house and give attention to purchasing a double portion of oil.'

'We do not know the day, we do not know the hour, but we know it is approaching.' The Bridegroom is coming. We are approaching the time when the Father will take His seat. This word is proclaimed in accordance with the sovereign times and the seasons of the Lord.

The virgins who became wise evidently woke up in response to the word in a prompt and timely manner. They may have hit 'snooze' a couple of times, but not too many times. They woke up in response to the word

in a prompt and timely manner. They trimmed their lamps, and they gave attention to the lamp. I do not think it is talking just about a snip of the wick. I think they are giving full attention to their lamp and their need to purchase oil. They are waking up; they are trimming their lamps; they are purchasing oil; they have time to purchase oil. Perhaps the foolish virgins took a lot longer to wake up. We know that they eventually did wake up. However, when they awoke, they only trimmed their lamps. They did not buy any oil. Both the wise and foolish virgins had oil in their lamps, but only the wise had oil in their vessels.

This raises an important question for us. What is the difference between oil in our lamp and oil in our vessels? The foolish virgins are actually a bit further advanced in relation to oil in their lamp finally, than what we may have previously thought. What is the difference between oil in our lamp and oil in our vessel? We know that Jesus is using a parable, and He is talking about an oil lamp, and He is talking about a vessel being some kind of a flask - a reservoir of oil that can be used to top up the lamp. We know all of that. What we do know is that Jesus is not talking about an external apparatus. He is talking about us. He is talking about us; He is talking about our houses; He is talking about our congregations; it is all about us. What is the lamp and what is the vessel?

I am going to talk about an individual - you as an individual son of God. What is oil in your lamp? Jesus said our lamp is our spirit and speaking about our spirit, He said in Matthew chapter 6 verse 22, 'The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good [or clear], your whole body will be full of light.' That is an extremely positive statement. 'The lamp of the body is the eye' - talking about our spirit. 'If therefore your eye is good [or clear], your whole body will be full of light.' Our eye is clear when we have been born of the Spirit as a son of God. You

have this newborn identity. You are born as a son of God. Your eye is clear and your whole body is full of light, full of illumination.

Because we are a son of God, the Holy Spirit continues to bring illumination and conviction to our spirit when the word of God is proclaimed to us by the messengers of Christ. We could liken this to receiving the illumination of the Holy Spirit. Remembering that the oil is the Spirit, we could liken receiving the illumination of the Holy Spirit in our spirit to receiving oil in our lamp. If we are not illuminated, if we are still asleep, if we are still not sure what the Lord is saying or why He is saying it, we cannot quite see the point, then we have not actually received any illumination. There is no oil in our lamp. We are still asleep and very much at risk of dying. But when the word comes and the Holy Spirit ministers illumination and conviction to our spirit and we are illuminated, we are lit up - there is oil in our lamp. This is a necessary and wonderful provision. However, it is important to recognise that our *illumination* does not equal our *obedience*. Now this is the key distinction between *oil in our lamp* and *oil in our vessel*. Having been illuminated by the Spirit, we must choose to become obedient to the word that we have heard.

The Holy Spirit enables us by the power of Eternal Spirit to present our physical body to God each day to join the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. This is a daily reality for us. We are presenting ourselves to God by the Spirit. Our daily participation begins as we pray in the Holy Spirit. This is the first element of our obedience each and every day as a son of God. Our daily participation begins as we pray in the Holy Spirit to join the fellowship of Christ's intercessory prayer and travail in the garden of Gethsemane.

It is not now just 'watch' (as essential as that command is), it is also 'watch and pray'. Our

daily participation begins as we pray in the Holy Spirit to join the fellowship of Christ's intercessory prayer and travail in the garden of Gethsemane. As we participate in the seven wounding events that Christ experienced from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross, our heart is being regenerated. We have been hearing how that works. Our heart is being regenerated as the life of the divine nature is permeating every part of our body.

Our hope then is not being disappointed. The love of God, the divine nature, is poured into our heart through the Holy Spirit. As we participate in the seven wounding events that Christ experienced from Gethsemane to the cross, our heart is being regenerated, and we are learning the obedience that Christ has already learned for us. This is bringing us to 'oil in our vessel'. This is a very simple point. What is your vessel? I am talking about you individually as a son of God. The Scripture describes our physical body as a vessel. Paul says, 'Each one of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honour.' 1Th 4:4. He is talking about you and your body - body, soul and spirit now - the whole of you - your vessel. He also says in 2 Corinthians 4 verse 7, 'But we have this treasure [talking about the divine nature], in earthen vessels that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.' That is talking about the manifestation of *exanastasis* or resurrection life in a mortal body.

If the evidence that we have oil in our lamp is illumination, the evidence that we have oil in our vessel will be that we have a testimony of Christ's resurrection life in our mortality. We will have a testimony regarding the work of regeneration in our heart and a testimony regarding the obedience that we are learning as a son of God. Those two things are together because we are becoming obedient from the heart. That will be our testimony. The fruit then of

our obedience will be our sanctification. This is very simple concerning oil in our vessel and what it looks like. We have a testimony of regeneration. We have a testimony concerning the obedience that we are learning, and we are progressively becoming obedient from the heart. The fruit of that is that we are possessing our sanctification. This will be obvious to everybody when this is true.

We will consider that a foolish virgin has oil in their lamp but no oil in their vessel. (I am trying to make a point here.) We have them all starting off asleep and they are all definitely foolish; but eventually they all wake up. The foolish virgins do go out to meet the Bridegroom. They do have some illumination - but they have not purchased any oil in their vessel. There is no testimony; there is no manifestation of resurrection life in their mortality in terms of obedience and regeneration. When we consider that a foolish virgin has oil in their lamp but no oil in their vessel, it highlights the reality that they are accountable for their disobedience and their lack of sanctification. As I said, the foolish virgins are actually just a little bit further advanced than what we may have previously thought. There is oil in the lamp, but no oil in the vessel - no double portion.

2 Timothy chapter 2 verse 21 says, 'If anyone cleanses himself from the latter [from being a vessel of dishonour], he will be a vessel for honour, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.' Sanctification is our key word here. 'A vessel for honour, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.' This work belongs to a wise virgin, having a double portion of oil is to serve the Father as part of a kingdom of priests. In the time of the end, the work that belongs to the wise virgins will include the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom as a testimony in all nations.

This is what Jesus is talking about when he says that when the Father takes His seat, 'The

righteous will shine forth as the Son in the kingdom of their Father.' Mat 13:43. Is that helpful in terms of the distinction between oil and vessel, and what the double portion looks like in terms of our sanctification as sons of God? Let us look at a summary here. This is Ephesians 5 verse 14. I think this is a helpful passage where Paul is summarising the point. Ephesians 5 verses 14 and 15: 'Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light.'

It is 'Awake, and you who sleep, arise from the dead and Christ will give you light. [You will be illuminated by the Spirit. Having been illuminated...] See then that you walk [we are illuminated, but there are two different ways of walking. He is saying that you make sure you walk] circumspectly [on the pathway that Christ has pioneered for you] not as fools, but as wise [virgins], redeeming the time... [another translation says, 'making the most of the opportunity'. It does take time to purchase oil in your vessel.] ...redeeming the time [making the most of the opportunity by obtaining the oil in your vessel] because the days are evil.' We know that; we see that; the days are evil. Never has there been a more evil generation. We know we are approaching the time when the Father will take His seat. The imperative is on us here to make the most of the opportunity. 'Redeeming the time because the days are evil.' Verse 17, 'Therefore do not be unwise [do not be foolish], but understand what the will of the Lord is.' What is the will of the Lord? Your sanctification. Understand what the will of the Lord is. It is your sanctification as a son of God. Hopefully that is helpful in terms of that parable.

I am going to continue to read in the book of Revelation now. This is Revelation chapter 3 verse 2. We have already read this verse, but we will continue looking at it. 'Be watchful [This is speaking to the presbytery firstly] and then strengthen the things which remain [or literally 'the remaining ones'] who are ready

to die. [He is talking to a presbytery that is asleep. He is saying that you need to wake up and make sure you are purchasing a double portion of oil, then focus your attention, in terms of your ministry, on the remaining ones (the remnant, who are also asleep). They need to wake up and make sure they are getting a double portion of oil.] Strengthen the things which remain [that is literally 'the remaining ones'], for I have not found your works perfect before God.'

Jesus was instructing the presbytery to strengthen (or establish) the remnant in their lampstand church. The word here for 'strengthen' means 'to set fast'. It literally means 'to turn'. You could think of screwing something — 'to turn resolutely in a certain direction'. That is a great little illustration. So how do you establish the remnant? You are proclaiming the word by the Spirit and then compelling every hearer to turn resolutely to Christ - to meet Him. Let us stay with the picture of the Rock that is Christ and then turn resolutely like screw piers. I know you probably do not put screw piers into a rock, but this is really going to be firmly fixed and established in the Rock. Make sure the remnant is firmly established on the Rock because they are obedient to Christ. A presbytery that is obedient to Christ is proclaiming the word and calling for obedience to Christ to ensure that every person is firmly established on that Rock.

We know that the Rock is a stumbling stone - the same Rock (Christ) is a stumbling stone to those who are disobedient. But for those who are obedient, He is the chosen and precious Cornerstone in Zion. We are building our life and building our houses, through our obedience, on that Rock and the rain is coming. As the word is continuing to be proclaimed, the Lord is raining righteousness on us. For the person who has refused to build their house on the Rock (this is another distinction between wise and foolish), they are building on the sand

because they have their own gospel. They have their own foundation. They do not want to be obedient to Christ. There has been some point of crisis where they love something else more than Christ. They are on the sand. The word is coming and the very word that has rained from heaven should be promoting fruitfulness and regeneration in our lives. But that very word is undermining their foundation, and as they continue to react against it, that word is sweeping them away and destroying that house.

That is the parable of the wise man building on the rock and the foolish man building on the sand. That is Jesus' illustration of that. He is saying to the presbytery here in Sardis, 'Can you make sure that everyone is firmly established on the Rock so that their house is secure and it endures?' We know that the call to obedience is a polarising word and in the end many believers do become offended by the need to be obedient to Christ, particularly when this word causes conflict or division within their family. In the end the remnant includes every son of God and all the families who are making their calling and election sure by obeying the word of God.

Jesus is saying here, 'Be watchful, strengthen the things which remain [or the remaining ones] for I have not found your works perfect before God [or in the sight of God].' He is describing a certain mode of ministry which I will not touch on now.

We will continue to read verse 3. 'Remember therefore how you have received and heard.' I will quickly highlight a couple of things. It is *how* you have received and heard. Remember that was the word last NBS? 'Take heed how you hear.' There is a big difference between receiving the word as information for your mind and receiving the illumination and conviction of the Lord to your spirit. 'Take heed *how* you received and heard.' He is saying that there are two different ways of hearing. 'Take heed how you hear', because if

you are hearing the right way, you will be receiving something. If the Holy Spirit is illuminating your spirit, then you will receive faith through hearing.

If you are receiving faith through hearing - you are receiving; you are believing for a fulfillment of what God is saying to you. That can actually come about. You are also receiving the Holy Spirit through the hearing of faith. There is a double take on this verse. 'Take heed how you receive.' Received what? Firstly, faith through hearing, but then secondly, how you received the Spirit through the hearing of faith. That is what Paul says to the Galatians in Galatians 3 verses 1 to 3.

I will continue to read here in Revelation verse 3. 'Remember, therefore how you received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore, if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.' We are talking about Him coming as a Bridegroom, but He is also coming as a thief. Now why a thief? It is really emphasising the unexpected time during the night. If you knew at what time the thief was coming, you would make sure your house was secure. Mat 24:42 and 43. He is coming at a time you do not expect; but it is more than that. He is coming as a thief. He is not just someone sneaky in the middle of the night. He is actually a thief. He is coming if we are not watching and if we are not obedient. He is coming to take something from us - something that He has previously given to us, and then He is taking it from us. This is the lesson of the parable of the minas and also the parable of the talents. He comes as a thief. To the man who put the mina in the handkerchief, Christ comes at an hour that he does not expect, and He takes it from him.

To the man who buried the talent in the ground, Christ comes at an hour he does not expect, as a thief, and He takes it from him. And at the same time, if Christ is taking the

mina and the talent from us, He is going to also take us out in judgement with it. 'Behold I am coming as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.'

Let us finish here with Revelation chapter 3 verse 4. This is where I really want to conclude. 'You have a few names [this is the third group here] you have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.'

When you are reading the book of Revelation, you read through all of the events, and they are all coming to a climax in terms of the sequence at the end of Revelation chapter 16 with the battle of Armageddon. We know that Revelation chapter 17 is coming back, and one of the presbyters is talking to John about the judgement of Babylon, etc. In terms of the events, you are reading through to the end of chapter 16. Do you know the big summary statement that Jesus Himself makes? John hears Jesus proclaim from heaven the key point to us. He says (this is Revelation 16 verse 15. I am thinking of this as the big summary in terms of what Jesus is saying. He says), 'Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches [we are going to add to that - watches and purchases a double portion of oil], and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.'

I will ask a bit of a question: in terms of the man in the parable of the wedding feast (I know we are canvassing a lot of parables here), the King comes in and He sees a man with no wedding garment. What happened to that wedding garment? Your wedding garment is the same as your priestly garment and you receive it when the Father baptises you into Christ and you put on Christ. You are invested with clothing there. That is your priestly garment; that is your wedding garment. But if we do not keep that garment clean (it becomes defiled by the world and the flesh), we are not washing that garment

in the blood of the Lamb - a fellowship in Christ's seven wounding events; if we have no commitment to the sanctification, our own sanctification and our priestly garment, our wedding garment becomes defiled. It is the same principle as the parable of the minas and the parable of the talents. Christ Himself comes and takes it from us. We then find ourselves with no garment and the King comes in and says, 'Why?' He already knows the answer to the question. 'Why do you have no garment on? Take the person and bind them hand and foot and throw him into the lake of fire. It is outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. We have to keep our garment.

That is where I want to finish. Verse four: You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.' There are two ways our garments can become defiled. One is the world, and one is the flesh.

For all of the children, think pictorially here. You are wearing a garment and there are two ways it can get dirty. It can get dirty on the *outside* or can get dirty on the *inside*. If you are not showering for a prolonged period of time, then your garment is going to get grubby on the inside. But if you are going out and playing in the mud, then it is going to get dirty on the outside. We have two different principles here. I am not talking about our physical flesh. Our garment can be spotted by the world or spotted by the flesh. One is external; one is internal. James says in James 1 verse 27, 'Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble [or distress] and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.' We know he is not just talking primarily about the world out there, because we are *in* the world, but not *of* the world and as sons of God, we are going out into the world to manifest the sign of the Son of Man. He is talking about all of the spirits and

attitudes of the world that are in the church or have been in the church and have then gone out of the church - the 'Esau dynamic'. He is saying that this will defile your garment. In conjunction with that, I will read these verses to make this point. 1 Corinthians 5 verse 9 is clarifying what Paul is talking about in relation to the world. He says, 'I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with immoral people. I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world - the descendants of Noah, generically out there; or with the covetous and swindlers or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world.' He is not saying that. 'But I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother, if he is an immoral person or covetous or an idolater or a reviler, or a drunkard or a swindler - not even to eat with such a one.' Paul had the same instruction regarding those who are openly disobedient and walk in a disorderly manner and cause divisions and offenses. There are a lot of verses that make that point. That is in terms of spotted with the world.

But Christ is making another bigger point. There is actually a bigger issue here in relation to the flesh. Our flesh is our carnality. The foremost manifestation of carnality is self-righteousness. Isaiah said, 'We are like an unclean thing, and all of our righteousnesses are like filthy rags.' Isa 64:6. A self-righteous person does not fear God. Rather they believe that God approves of and supports their own religious perspective and initiatives. They believe that their own fallen expression of love is the same as God's love. You can see how important it is for us to be illuminated concerning the love of God and how it only operates in sanctification. It is the expression of sanctification, and it is always focused towards sanctification. The self-righteous person believes that their own fallen expression of love is the same as God's love. The Lord addressed this sin of presumption among His people in Psalm 50

verse 21. This is a classic statement in a very helpful verse.

‘These things you have done, and I kept silent... [It is a big mistake to think that just because the Lord is not specifically saying something about something that He is happy with it] ...These things you have done, and I kept silent; you thought that I was altogether like you... [Then He says, ‘But I will actually speak about it. I will actually say something.’] ...I will rebuke you and set them in order before your eyes.’

The apostle Paul addressed the Corinthians on how their garments were becoming spotted with the world. But the bigger issue was how their garments were becoming spotted with the flesh. That was because of their own self-righteous religious presumption in terms of what they were embracing and what they were normalising.

That is what Jude is talking about in Jude 1 verse 20 to 23. He says, ‘But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God... [which is completely sanctified] Keep yourselves in the love of God, [not your own view; not your own love; in *His* love] ...the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And on some have compassion, making a distinction... [there will be those who are doubting (talking about within our own fellowship of the *agape* meal). We are not engaging in disputes, rather we are encouraging every person to receive the word of God with meekness and to stand accountably before Christ in relation to their own obedience.] ...but save others with fear [the fear of God before our eyes] pulling them out of the fire. [It is talking about the fire of eternal judgement. That is where Joshua the high priest was. He was a brand snatched from the fire. The ministry of Zechariah was absolutely necessary for him because his garment was spotted by the world and the flesh.] ... But save others with

fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.’

Revelation 3 verse 4: ‘You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments [by washing their garments, making them white in the blood of the Lamb, walking in sanctification]; they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.’

It is not possible to be a worthy house if our priestly garments have become soiled by the world or by the flesh. If we are a worthy house, we are called to walk with Christ as part of a kingdom of priests. This is what the Lord is calling us to - to walk with Him. Every worthy household is called to become a firstfruits household that walks with Christ in fellowship from house to house.

Let us read verse 5. ‘He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the book of life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.’ This is all written in the positive and again we have been rejoicing that our name is from the Father. It is known from before the foundation of the world. Then Christ the one Seed has fulfilled all of the works that belong to our name. All of those wounding events were forming the substance of our name on His offering journey. Our name is written in the Lamb’s book of life and as sons of God we are rejoicing in this. But our name will only remain in the book of life if we are being cleansed and sanctified. The reverse is true, and this is the big sobering point. It is sobering to consider that the reverse is also true.

If we are not washing our robes, then our name will be blotted out of the book of life. Jesus Christ Himself will deny that He knows us. If a person’s name is blotted out of the book of life, it means that they have been assigned a portion in the lake of fire. Describing the judgement of the great white throne at the end of the millennium, the apostle John wrote, ‘Anyone not found

written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.' Rev 20:15. So we do not finish right there, let us read the verse again in the positive.

'He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the book of life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.'

In the end this is everything - that we know Christ. It is not just what *we* say, it is *His* confession that really matters. He confesses before the Father that *He* knows *us*. And on the basis of that confession, the Father says, 'I will write My name on their forehead, and they will have the privilege of revealing My name and feeding the Bread of life to the world in the time of the end once the Father has taken His seat.' We will leave it there. Thanks.