

Revelation 3.1-6

“DEAD!!”

Disappointed with Study of Revelation?? NO NEW SECRETS REVEALED
 ANTICHRIST > Not yet Identified > BEAST, DRAGON, GREAT HARLOT
 Have not Revealed MILLENNIAL Position > or Proposed Dates of 2nd Coming

Churches > Today 5th / 2 to Go > Roman Province of Asia > Modern TURKEY
 Sardis > 50 kms South of Thyatira > 80 kms East of Ephesus
 Located at JUNCTION of FIVE MAIN ROADS > Along POSTAL ROUTE
 On Rock Plateau > 500 meters high > Perpendicular Walls > Strongly Fortified City
 PROTECTED > Only 1 Point of Access > Narrow NECK of Land from South

Why Churches? > GOD’s PLAN for WORLD > He’s Building > Preparing Bride
 “His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should
 be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to
 his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord” Ephes 3.10,11
 CHURCH is to SHOW CHRIST to WORLD > Angels Here & Watching YOU!

Jesus to Sardis: 1. Analysis 2. Admonitions 3. Authority

1. Analysis

a. The World v. 1 “you have a reputation of being alive”

SARDIS > City with GOLDEN PAST > King Midas got rid of GOLDEN TOUCH
 By washing in STREAM near Sardis > “had Gold Dust in its Silt”
 Sardis was CAPITAL for King CROESUS > “to be as RICH as Croesus”

6th Cent BC Sardis > One of MOST POWERFUL Cities of Ancient World
 Capital Ancient Kingdom of Lydia > then became seat of Persian Governor
 Sardis > City of Wealth & Fame > Gold & Silver COINS 1st Struck There
 First City to discover the Art of DYEING WOOL

CHURCH had a GOOD NAME > Citizens of Sardis > Were IMPRESSED
 PERHAPS > Fed the Hungry Poor > Cared for Lonely Elderly > Program for Kids

Probably BIBLE TOTERS & BIBLE QUOTERS > Bible Exposed their Hypocrisy

OTHER CHURCHES > Probably Envious? Reputation was Good
 ENJOYED a GOOD REPUTATION but did not DESERVE IT

“I dare say its congregation was quite large for those days, and was growing and even fashionable. Its programme included many excellent projects. It was positively humming with activity. There was no shortage in the church of money or talent or manpower. There was every indication of life and vigor.” John Stott

b. The One Analysis that MATTERS MOST from God Himself >

v. 1 “I know your deeds...you are dead”

Outward APPEARANCES can be DECEIVING > Man’s Praise > God’s Rebuke
Like the FIG TREE of Mark 11 it had LEAVES but NO FRUIT

2 X’s - 549 B.C. & 218 B.C. – CITY Surprised & Defeated by Attacking Enemies
Skillful Climbers ATTACKED at NIGHT > Surprised Overconfident Citizens

17 A.D. City was PARTIALLY DESTROYED by an EARTHQUAKE
Again Self-Satisfied and Boastful Citizens CAUGHT by SURPRISE

JESUS words sent SHOCK WAVES STRONGER than Earthquake > DEAD!!!

“In spite of their faults, in all the churches so far addressed Christ has recognized much good. What will he find to commend in Sardis? Nothing. The only ‘good’ she has is a good reputation, for which in fact there is no basis.” Michael Wilcock

1) Too Good > Church was AT PEACE with the WORLD

NO PERSECUTION from Romans > NO SLANDER from the Jews
No Jezebel, No Balaam, No Nicolaitans, No Satan >> NO REAL LIFE in Church
Untroubled by HERESY and free from PERSECUTION

“Woe to you when *all men speak well of you*, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets.” Luke 6.26

“Sardis...should have been a light-bearer. It failed in its duty. Hence, neither the Jews nor the Gentiles seem to have greatly bothered the people of Sardis. Sardis was a very ‘peaceful’ church. It enjoyed peace, that is, the peace of the cemetery!
William Hedriksen

CHURCH was COMFORTABLY at HOME in this LOST & LYING WORLD

“Why did both Jews and Romans leave this church undisturbed? The answer may be its lack of aggressive and positive Christianity. Content with mediocrity, lacking both the enthusiasm to entertain a heresy and the depth of conviction which provokes intolerance, it was too innocuous to be worth persecuting.” Leon Morris

2) Too Bad > Word we do our Best to NEVER USE > DEAD!

Modern People DO NOT DIE > Gone On, Passed Away, Gone Home, Not Here
Word DEAD is so COLD, ULTIMATE, and FINAL > HOPELESS!!

Three Ideas in Society Today about Mankind’s Spiritual Condition:

a) Good > some MINOR Problems > few BAD PEOPLE > Most Basically Good

b) Sick > Many PROBLEMS > there is CURE > Education > Health Care > Gov’t
Cure for Man is in the hands of Man > Just sing “We are the World”

c) Dead > Man cannot help Himself > Beyond Cure and Beyond Hope

God WARNED 1st PARENTS: “You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it *you will surely die*” Genesis 2.17

“the wages of sin is *death*” Romans 6.23

“*you were dead* in your transgressions and sins” Ephesians 2.1

Prodigal Son’s Father said, “This son of mine was *dead*” Luke 15.24

DEAD? > Observation DEFIES that Description > People Bodies like Athletes
Minds like Scholars / Personalities like Movie Stars > AT LEAST I DO!

DEAD?? > Dead to God > Garden of Eden > After Eating Forbidden Fruit
God calls the GUILTY COUPLE: “Where are you?”...“I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.” Genesis 3.8,9

Hiding > Broken Fellowship > Guilty > Naked > ASHAMED > Spiritually DEAD
DEATH = SEPARATION > Mankind SEPARATED from God

“you were separate from Christ...without hope and without God in the world”
Ephesians 2.12

Church of Sardis > Classic Example of NOMINAL CHRISTIANITY
 NAMED Christian > Not ENOUGH EVIDENCE to Prove them GUILTY

v. 6 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

“The church at Sardis did not have ears to hear, and despite all of its status, wealth, and reputation, it lies in ruins today.”
 Anne Graham Lotz

“This lesson is devastatingly relevant for us. Groups can bear the name of a church, and have a certain reputation, when it is doubtful that they are truly churches at all. The essence of a church is not its programs, buildings, past achievements, reputation, institutional greatness, or formal doctrinal correctness, but its spiritual life. This life comes only through fellowship with the living Christ, and is demonstrated through the seriousness of repentance and obedience.”

Vern S. Poythress

2. Admonitions

Despite Jesus’ DEVASTATING INDICTMENT > It is NOT TOO LATE
 SITUATION is HORRIBLE but it is NOT HOPELESS > Letter Continues...

5 commands > Organized under 3 Headings

Unlike the Previous “Problem” Churches, for Sardis Repentance NOT Enough

a. Get Up v. 2 “Wake up!” Somber WARNING to a SLUMBERING CHURCH
 Church is on the verge of ceasing to be a community of faith.

“Sardis presumed upon its invincibility and went to sleep without posting adequate guards upon the walls. The besieging forces sent men up the steep cliffs at night to scale the wall and open the gate from inside. When the people of Sardis arose in the morning, they were captives!”
 M. Robert Mulholland, Jr.

Words for “Wake Up!” > MILITARY OVERTONES > Sardis forgot their Battle

v. 3 “But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.”

Christ will “come like a thief” > Unexpectedly > Judgment

NOT 2nd Coming > Judgment on Church in Sardis by Jesus in their MIDST
 2nd Coming NOT Dependent on Whether or Not Believers in Sardis Repent

“We may observe of this Epistle that in great part it is woven together of sayings which the Lord had already uttered in the days which he pitched his tent among men; he is now setting his seal from heaven upon his words uttered from earth.”

R.C. Trench

b. Look Up REMEMBER THE GLORY DAYS > Lift up Your Head!

“Sardis in the first century was a relic of the period of barbaric warfare, which lived rather on its ancient prestige than on its suitability to present conditions.”

G.B. Caird

King MIDAS and King CROESUS were DISTANT MEMORIES

v. 3 “Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard” > KING JESUS

GO BACK TO THE FOOT OF THE CROSS > Return to your FIRST LOVE
To that RUSH of CLEANSING GRACE > Sins Removed as far as East from West
HOMECOMING > Creator God became your Father God through Brother Jesus

Take Your STAND AGAIN on the FIRM FOUNDATION of His WORD

c. Shape Up A Remnant of LIFE REMAINS > Door of Grace remains Open

v. 2,3 “Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God... obey it, and repent.”

ARISE! from your SPIRITUAL STUPOR > Salvage and Fortify what Remains

“The hour has come for you to *wake up from your slumber*, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.”

Romans 13.11

“Was this a church with alive, “exciting” worship that appealed to the tastes of the culture but was dead to the genuine awe and humility of true worship? Was this a church with alive, “entertaining” programs for children, youth, and adults that confirmed the status quo but was dead to the transforming grace of God? Was this a church with alive, “socially aware” attitudes and activities whose deadness sought to legitimize personal and social aberrations rather than witness to the liberating power of God? Was this a church so “alive” with the world’s perspectives, values, and behaviors that it was “dead” to those of the kingdom? There are many such Sardis-type churches in the world today.”

M. Robert Mulholland, Jr.

3. Authority

a. Calls > JESUS Voice Lightens DARKNESS > RAISES the DEAD

If we tried shouting to Raise DEAD in Cemetery > LOOSE your VOICE & Mind?
Such SHOUTING would be FUTILE and FOOLISH Effort

v. 1 "To the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars."

Sardis Huge Temple of Artemis > thought Power to bring the Dead to Life
ONLY Jesus HOLDS POWER to REVIVE Dead Church > Holy Spirit & WORD

Seven Spirits > 7 fold Spirit > COMPLETE SPIRIT = HOLY SPIRIT of God
Seven Stars > Star = Messenger > of what?? WORD OF GOD
WHAT GIVES LIFE TO DEAD?? SPIRIT of Jesus and WORD of Jesus!

"I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live." John 5.25

JESUS stood at Grave of DEAD Friend LAZARUS called Name > Alive > Why?
"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die." John 11.25,26

GREAT VALLEY of DRY BONES > Prophet Ezekiel Preached > CAME ALIVE
"You, my people, will know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. I will put *my Spirit* in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that *I the LORD have spoken*, and I have done it, declares the LORD." Ezekiel 37.13,14

GOD CALLS by WORD and SPIRIT Today:

"the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" Ephesians 6.17

NICENE CREED "one holy, catholic, and APOSTOLIC Church"

NT APOSTLES > Once for All FOUNDATION of their Word > NEW Testament

INSEPERABLE IN MINISTRY > 'Holy Spirit says..' What Chapter and Verse?
APOSTLES > "thus says the Lord..."

MESSENGERS in APOSTOLIC CHURCH > "the Bible says...."

b. Cleanses SARDIS famous for its WOOLEN and DYED GOODS

v. 4,5 “Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes..., dressed in white, for they are worthy...He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white.”

Roman world > People were Identified by their Clothing

Only Emperor & Patricians could wear Purple Togas / Equestrian class > wore Red

CLOTHES MAKE THE MAN > In Roman Society

Christian’s “garment” was the witness of their faithful discipleship.

WHITE > Purity, Festivity, Victory, JUSTIFICATION > PREPARED & PURE

WHITE ROBE > Jewish Essenes at Qumran > Sign of Purity

ROMAN EMPEROR in TRIUMPHAL PROCESSION

Kyrgyz man from Bishkek > Met at Bus Stop > White Choir Robe and Turban
Stares of People / Cars / Neighbors > All out enjoying Day > AMAZED

Ancient Religion in Asia Minor > DIRTY GARMENTS Dishonored the Deity
People with SOILED CLOTHES BANNED from WORSHIP

7 X’s in Revelation SAINTS are Described Wearing WHITE ROBES > WORTHY

“One of the elders asked me, "These in white robes--who are they, and where did they come from?"... "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”

Revelation 7.13,14

“To be accounted worthy by the Lord means to be reckoned so by grace, the grace which gave life, developed it, kept it sound and clean to the end.” R.C.H. Lenski

Being MADE WORTHY > Carries Responsibility of Trying to LIVE WORTHY

“We pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God”
Colossians 1.10

c. Companionship v. 4 “They will walk with me”

PERHAPS this was Main Flaw of Sardis > Did Right things for Wrong Reason

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"
Matthew 7.21-23

JESUS does NOT DISAGREE with their DEEDS > "They never KNEW HIM"
DEEDS of Church of Sardis > IMPRESSIVE > Did not Walk with God

Revelation: God RESTORES what was LOST IN GARDEN OF EDEN
Adam & Eve and Enoch > Walked w/ God as FRIEND & FATHER

"Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life...hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh."
Jude 21,23

d. Confidence

"For the renegades let there be no hope, and may the arrogant kingdom soon be rooted out in our days and may the Nazarenes...perish...and be blotted out from the book of life and with the righteous may they not be inscribed"
Jewish Sabbath Benediction from end of First Century

SCHINDLER had a LIST > of Jews who would ESCAPE the NAZI Death Camps
SETTING THEM FREE cost Schindler dearly > Small Price compared to CROSS

v. 5 "I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels."

Even the Promise carries a WARNING > Negative Promise not BLOTTED OUT
Most of the Church will be LOST > You MAY NOT Be

"Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven."
Matthew 10.32

We CONFESS on Earth > Jesus CONFESSES in Heaven // Stephen in Acts 7

AFTER PEOPLE OF ISRAEL MADE THE GOLDEN CALF & WORSHIPPED
"The LORD replied to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against me I will blot out of my book." Exodus 32.33

Book of Life > Register of all Citizens in Theocratic Community of Israel

Ancient CITY > Names in City Registry > ERASED at Death or Treacherous Act

“The imagery must not be interpreted literalistically...It would be altogether wrong to imagine an activity of constant book-keeping in heaven, involving not only the registration of new names but also the removal of names previously entered and the restoration of names previously removed. Such a conception could only be conducive to insecurity on the part of God’s people (whose names might be in his book today and out tomorrow) and to uncertainty even in the mind of God himself regarding the ultimate outcome of his redemptive action, which is unthinkable.”

Philip Edgcumbe Hughes

Good Shepherd says of his sheep: ‘I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand’
John 10.28

CANNOT LOSE SALVATION > God Himself HOLDS ON TO IT > and to US!

What does ALIVE Church LOOK LIKE? > FERVENT AND FAITHFUL

FERVENT > Eager for Him > WORSHIP, WORD, SERVICE, PRAYER

FAITHFUL > Punctual, Prompt, See task DO IT, Complete the Task called to Do