

The Church At Sardis

Rev. 3:1-6

Sardis

1. Sardis was a city of western Asia Minor and located about 50 miles East of Smyrna, and 35 miles Southeast of Thyatira. It was the capital of the ancient kingdom of Lydia.
2. This is the fifth of the seven churches of Asia Jesus addressed in Revelation. (Rev. 1:11; 3:1,4).
3. Sardis was made wealthy by textile manufacturing and jewelry making.
4. Here are said to have been minted the first coins under the opulent [wealthy] Croesus.
5. Cyrus the Great overcame the city in 546 B.C., and Antiochus the Great did the same in 218 B.C.
6. Wealthy Sardis citizens took up with mystery cults, notably with that of Cybele.
 - a. She was a Phrygian goddess who represented the Mother Earth and was worshiped as a goddess of fertility, nature, caverns, and mountains, as well as the walls and fortresses.
 - b. She was worshiped in the cities of ancient Greece and the Roman Empire.
 - c. Sardis has been called as a city of degeneration, and the church was quickly becoming like the city.
 - d. They were conforming to the world rather than transforming the world. (Rom. 12:1,2).
7. Neither the city or the church exist today.
8. Righteousness exalted a nation or city or church, and righteousness barely existed in the church at Sardis.
9. It was a peaceful church of good reputation that was basically a graveyard with very little life there.
10. The church was not troubled without by Gentiles or Jews, but had sunk in its spirituality to the point it was dead on the inside.
11. We do not know the size of this congregation or how it was established.
12. It was likely established by some who worked with Paul. (Acts 19:10).

ACT 19:10 And this took place for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.

Description Of Jesus Including His Knowledge

REV 3:1 "And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: He who has the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars, says this: 'I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.

1. "And to the angel of the church in Sardis write:" - See notes Rev. 2:1.

2. "He who has the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars, says this"

a. "seven Spirits" are mentioned several times in this book. (Rev. 1:4; 4:5; 5:6).

REV 1:4 John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come; and from the **seven Spirits** who are before His throne;

REV 4:5 And from the throne proceed flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder. And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the **seven Spirits of God**;

REV 5:6 And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the **seven Spirits of God**, sent out into all the earth.

1) The "seven Spirits [or spirits]" are "before His [God's] throne." (Rev. 1:4).

2) "The seven Spirits [or spirits] are identified as "seven lamps of fire burning before the throne." (Rev. 4:5).

3) "The seven Spirits [or spirits] of God" are identified as "having seven horns and seven eyes." (Rev. 5:6).

b. The identity of the "seven Spirits" or "seven Spirits of God" is very unclear.

1) We know from scripture that there is only "One Spirit" referring to the Holy Spirit. (Eph. 4:4; Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14; Gal. 5:16, 22, 25). See Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29:3:6, 13, 22; 4:2; 14:13; 22:17.

2) Some seek to identify the "seven Spirits [spirits] of God" with the "seven angels" of the "seven churches."

3) Some seek to identify the "seven Spirits [spirits] of God" with the seven archangels that Jews believed stand in the presence of God.

4) The Bible does not mention seven archangels, but it does teach there is more than one. (Dan. 10:13).

DAN 10:13 "But the prince of the kingdom of Persia was withstanding me for twenty-one days; **then behold, Michael, one of the chief princes**, came to help me, for I had been left there with the kings of Persia.

5) Some believe the words " seven Spirits" [spirits] denotes the perfection of the Holy Spirit.

a) The Holy Spirit, as Deity, is perfect like the Father and the Son, but one cannot be certain this is what is meant by the words "seven Spirits of God."

b) Though we cannot be absolutely certain, this is the probable meaning of the words.

c) "Seven" is often used to mean "completion, perfection."

6) Assuming "Seven Spirits of God" refers to the Holy Spirit, all three members are mentioned in Revelation 1. (Rev. 1:4,5).

REV 1:4 John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come; and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne;

REV 1:5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us, and released us from our sins by His blood,

7) Wayne Jackson commenting on these verses, in his article on **Who Are the Seven Spirits**, said,

“It would be strange indeed that there is an allusion to God, the Father, in Revelation 1:4a, a reference to Jesus Christ in 1:5a, while sandwiched between these two members of the Godhead there is a suggestion of mere angels, etc., much less a figurative non-entity of some sort. This does not seem reasonable at all”

c. “Seven stars are the angels of the seven churches.” (Rev. 1:20).

REV 1:20 "As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

3. “I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead” - The Lord was fully aware of the exact condition of the church and each member of it.
 - a. This congregation had fooled itself and many others about its spiritual condition, but not the Lord.
 - b. They had a reputation of being alive and active, but they were in the Lord’s estimation “dead.” In the Lord’s estimation their spiritual condition was far inferior to their estimation of themselves and the estimation of others.
 - c. This was a church that was living on its past reputation. It could talk about what is used to do.
 - d. What men view as alive and active may be far from God’s judgment on this matter.
 - e. The church today must not live off its past reputation (as some seek to do), but should be zealous to obey the Lord and keep His commandments.

“Wake Up”

REV 3:2 'Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God.

1. 'Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain” - There was some good things about this church, but the church was very near death.
 - The Greek word “gregoreuo” [gray gahr yoo oh] means “to keep awake, to wake up from sleep.” The Amplified Bible has “rouse yourself and keep awake.” See Eph. 5:14.

EPH 5:14 For this reason it says, "Awake, sleeper, And arise from the dead, And Christ will shine on you."

- The “sterizo” [steh ree zoh] means “to make firm, immovable, steadfast.”
 - a. They needed to quickly strengthen what was left and be firm, immovable, steadfast in it.
 - b. Delay would be disastrous to their physical health and lives, and to the salvation of their souls.
 - c. It is dangerous to assume that the good in a congregation will always exist without an effort to “strengthen the things that remain.”
 - d. Things can very quickly turn from bad to worse.

- e. Decisive action must be taken - not remaining in state of indifference or merely hoping things will get better.
 - f. Elders must lead by word and example, and those who refuse to do so should step down.
2. “which were about to die” - Death of “the things that” remained was imminent.
 3. “for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God” - “Complete” is from “pleroo” [play **rah** oh] meaning “to bring to an end, to bring to completion, to perform fully.”
 - a. Nothing they had done was complete “in the sight” of God.
 - b. They may not have considered this a serious matter, but the Lord did.
 - c. “Completed” has the idea of satisfactory and pleasing.
 - d. It may also have the idea they did not finish what they started. They would have enthusiasm for a while, but did not complete what they started.
 - d. They were like those Paul addressed in his second letter to Timothy. (2 Tim. 3:5).

2TI 3:5 holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; and avoid such men as these.

“Remember”

REV 3:3 'Remember therefore what you have received and heard; and keep it, and repent. If therefore you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come upon you.

1. “Remember therefore what you have received and heard; and keep it, and repent” - The Greek “pos” [**pohs**] is an adverb and means “how, in what manner.”
 - a. They were to remember the gospel message they had heard and received, and return to the heartfelt attitude they had when they first became Christians. They needed to be like the Jerusalem church. (Acts 2:42).

ACT 2:42 And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

- b. They needed to take God’s word to heart and repent.
 - 1) “Godly sorrow” was greatly needed.
 - 2) It alone would lead to true repentance. (2 Cor. 7:10).
 - 3) It alone would lead the church to please God and be a shining light to other brethren and the lost world.
 - c. It was not enough to think about their sinful or fallen condition or plan one day to change.
 - d. Repentance must be immediate to make salvation sure.
2. “If therefore you will not wake up, I will come like a thief”
 - a. This is not the 2nd coming of Christ that would be long after the demise of the city of Sardis and the church there.

- b. It is Christ's judgment upon the church that could come as a thief without any warning.
- 3 "and you will not know at what hour I will come upon you" - His coming could come at any time, and this should give urgency to their repentance. See Prov. 27:1; Jas. 4:14.

Few Faithful At Sardis

REV 3:4 'But you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white; for they are worthy.'

1. "But you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments" - "Few people" refers to members of this congregation.

- The church is never praised or scolded for what the world does.
- The church is to be "the light of the world" - not vice versa. (Matt. 5:14-16).
- The "few people" were known by God because He knows His own. (2 Tim. 2:19).

2TI 2:19 Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord abstain from wickedness."

a. This shows it is possible to be faithful in an unfaithful congregation. It is possible to remain alive even among corpses.

1) Few churches have every member living righteously.

2) Most churches have members who have "soiled" their garments and continue to do so.

3) They should be disciplined if they did not repent, but this does not always occur especially if the faithful are in the minority.

b. Here are some members who had "not soiled their garments."

1) This does not mean they were sinless. (1 Jn. 1:8, 10).

2) It does mean they were walking uprightly seeking to please the Lord.

3) They had the "fruit of the Spirit" in their lives and were avoiding the works of the flesh. (Gal. 5:19-23).

4) This was most difficult to live righteously because of the city where they lived and the corruption in the church and the great discouragement this would cause among those seeking to live faithfully.

5) They needed to be the spark that lighted a flame in the church.

c. The words "soiled their garments" are not explained.

1) Based on what Christ had previously written to the first four congregations it would seem that this refers to moral corruption.

2) It is likely they had "put on" what Paul had taught the brethren at Colossae to "put aside." (Col. 3:5-9).

COL 3:5 Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.

COL 3:6 For it is on account of these things that the wrath of God will come,

COL 3:7 and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them.

COL 3:8 But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth.

COL 3:9 Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices,

3) There is no indication, in this letter, that they had become idolatrous or were unsound doctrinally.

4) The church today must make sure that it is both doctrinally sound and morally sound.

a) What the church believes about God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the church is very important.

b) How the church conducts itself morally is also very important. (Rom. 12:1,2; 1 Jn. 2:15-17; 2 Cor. 6:14-17).

5) One without the other is not acceptable to God.

6) Some churches are very meticulous about worship and organization, but quite worldly.

2. "and they will walk with Me in white; for they are worthy"

a. The words "walk with Me in white" mean they would enjoy eternal life in heaven with God.

b. The words "for they are worthy" do not mean they had earned salvation (Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:8), but mean the Lord would bless their faithfulness.

c. They trusted in His blood, and lived a life seeking to please Him.

"He Who Overcomes"

REV 3:5 'He who overcomes shall thus 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.'

1. "He who overcomes shall thus be clothed in white garments" - "White garments" denote garments of purity and victory.

2. "and I will not erase his name from the book of life" - The words were of great comfort to the one faithfully overcoming. His name would always be included in "the book of life." "The book of life" is God's list of the saved.

a. This book is mentioned several times in the Old Testament. (Exod. 32:32,33; Psa. 69:28; Dan. 12:1).

EXO 32:32 "But now, if Thou wilt, forgive their sin-- and if not, please blot me out from **Thy book which Thou hast written!**"

EXO 32:33 And the Lord said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against Me, **I will blot him out of My book.**

PSA 69:28 May they be blotted out of **the book of life**, And may they not be recorded with the righteous.

DAN 12:1 "Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued.

b. Paul mentioned it in the book of Philippians. (Phil. 4:3).

PHI 4:3 Indeed, true comrade, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, **whose names are in the book of life.**

c. The book of life is mentioned several other times in the book of Revelation. (Rev. 13:8; 17:8; 20:12,15, 21:27).

REV 13:8 And all who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain.

REV 17:8 "The beast that you saw was and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and to go to destruction. And those who dwell on the earth will wonder, whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will come.

REV 20:12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.

REV 20:15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

REV 21:27 and nothing unclean and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

3. "and I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels"

a. Those who acknowledge Christ, confess Him and live for Him, will be confessed by Jesus to His Father "before His angels."

b. We must confess Christ and never be ashamed of Him. (Matt. 10:32, 33; Mk. 8:38).

MAT 10:32 "Everyone therefore who shall confess Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven.

MAT 10:33 "But whoever shall deny Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.

MAR 8:38 "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."

c. The words "before His angels" speak of God's angels who constantly serve Him and His children. (Heb. 1:13).

HEB 1:13 But to which of the angels has He ever said, "Sit at My right hand, Until I make Thine enemies A footstool for Thy feet"?

d. God has innumerable angels serving Him and seeking always to please Him. (Rev. 5:11).

REV 5:11 And I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands,

e. Those blessed with heaven will enjoy God's rich blessings and rest (Rev. 14:13), but it is also a place of service. (Rev. 22:3).

REV 14:13 And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, "Write, 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!'" "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them."

REV 22:3 And there shall no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His bond-servants shall serve Him;

f. What a blessing it will be to be in the presence of God and have the privilege of serving Him throughout eternity!

REV 3:6 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

1. "He who has an ear" - Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29.
2. "let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

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