

## THE LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN SARDIS (Rev. 3:1-6)

### Read Revelation 3:1-6

#### **\*\*What Scholars Say\*\***

#### **DESTINATION**

**Rev.3:1 a.** The important commercial city of Sardis was located about 30 miles southeast of Thyatira, on an important trade route that ran east and west through the kingdom of Lydia. Important industries included jewelry, dye, and textiles, which had made the city wealthy. From a religious standpoint it was a center of pagan worship and site of a temple of Artemis, which ruins still remain. Archeologists have located the ruins of a Christian church building next to the temple. In addressing the message to the church Christ described Himself as the One who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars, similar to the description in Rev.1:4. Here Christ said He holds them, speaking of the Holy Spirit in relation to Himself (Isa 11:2-5; cf. Rev 5:6). As in Rev.1:20 the seven stars, representing the pastors of the churches, were also in His hands (cf. Rev. 2:1).

#### **COMMENDATION**

**Rev. 3:1 b.** The only word of approval is in actuality a word of rebuke as Christ declared that they had a reputation for being alive and apparently were regarded by their contemporaries as an effective church.

#### **REBUKE**

**Rev.3:1 c, 2 b.** Christ quickly stripped away their reputation of being alive by declaring, you are dead. Like the Pharisees, their outer appearance was a facade hiding their lack of life (cf. Matt 23:27-28). Christ added, I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of My God. They were falling far short of fulfilling their obligations as believers.

#### **EXHORTATION**

**Rev.3:2 a, 3.** They were exhorted to wake up from their spiritual slumber and to strengthen the few evidences of life they still had. He exhorted them to remember...obey..., and repent. He warned them that if they did not heed this exhortation, He would come on them like a thief, that is, suddenly and unexpectedly.

#### **PROMISE**

**Rev. 3:4-6.** While this church as a whole was dead or dying, Christ recognized a godly remnant in the Sardis church who had not soiled their clothes with sin. He promised that true believers will be dressed in white (cf. v. 18), symbolic of the righteousness of God, that their names will remain in the book of life, and that He will acknowledge them as His own before His Father and His angels. The statement that their names will not be erased from the book of life presents a problem to some. While this passage may imply that a name could be erased from the book of life, actually it gives a positive affirmation that their names will not be erased. Six times John referred to the book of life (Rev 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12,15; 21:27).

The letter also concludes with the exhortation to hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The letter to Sardis is a searching message to churches today that are full of activity and housed in beautiful buildings but are so often lacking in evidences of eternal life. Christ's word today is to "remember," "repent," and "obey," just as it was to the church in Sardis.

### **\*\*My Thoughts\*\***

- 1. This warning and rebuke is given to the assembly (the church) and the pastor – (the leadership or messenger of the church). Rev. 3:1, 6.**
- 2. Rev. 3:1 says “*I know your reputation as a live and active church, but you are dead.*” (Living Bible) It’s not always what you do but why are you doing it. Jesus searches the hearts and minds (Rev. 2:23).**
- 3. It appears there was a majority or at least a great number of people who were in sin in the church of Sardis. It appears to me that the pastor may have been tolerating the sin. This letter was written to the pastor as well as the church. Revelation 3:4 says, *you have only a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes.***
- 4. Jesus says: Remember the instructions that you received and heard from the Apostles: Obey them and repent when the need arises (See Acts 8:9-23).**
- 5. In my opinion Revelation 3:4-6 could be summed up by saying: “Walk in the light as He is in the light” (1 Jn. 1:7). There is an automatic cleansing as we walk in the light that obviously the people of Sardis had not chosen.**

## **CHRIST’S LETTER TO THE CHURCH OF SARDIS**

### **\*\*Questions\*\***

**REV 3:1 "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. I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. (NIV)**

- 1. Who instructed John to write down this vision? (3:1)**
- 2. Who was this letter addressed to? (3:1)**
- 3. What church was the focus of this letter from Jesus? (3:1)**
- 4. How did the speaker identify Himself? Who was this speaker? (3:1)**

5. Who are the seven stars that Christ holds? (See Rev.1:20)
4. What did Christ know about the church at Sardis? (3:1)
5. What was the reputation of the church at Sardis? (3:1)
6. How did the church's true nature match its reputation? (3:1)

**[2] Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God.**

1. What was wrong with the church at Sardis? (3:2)
2. Jesus did not rebuke the church for its deeds (works) but said, "*I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God.*" What do you think this might mean? 1 Cor. 13:3; Luke 11:42; Mark 7:9-13; Gal. 6:9-10; (Story of Helen B.); Matt 7:12

**[3] Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent. 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.**

1. What did Christ urge as the first step to restoration? (3:3)
2. What consequences were promised to those who refused to wake up? (3:3)

**REV 3:[4] 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. [5] He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels. [6] He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.**

1. How do we know that not all the Christians in Sardis were "asleep"? (3:4)
2. What blessings were promised to those who would "overcome"? (3:5)
3. In the Old Testament it appears that people's names could be blotted out of God's book for what reason? Exodus 32:31-33
4. In the New Testament it appears that people's names could be blotted out for what reason? Rev. 22:18-19
5. Can a New Covenant Christian have his name blotted out of the book of life? Why or why not?

6. In addition to the church at Sardis, who else was commanded to pay heed to this letter? (3:6)

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

**(NIV) New International Version**

Copyright 1973 by International Bible Society  
All rights reserved.

**New Testament**

**LESSON MAKER**

Colo. Springs, CO 80935

**Discipleship Evangelism**

delessons.org

**The Bible Knowledge Commentary**

Copyright 1983, SP Publications  
All rights reserved.

**Dake's Annotated Reference Bible**

Copyright 1963 by Finis Jennings Dake

**The Living Bible**

Copyright 1971 by Tyndale House Publishers'  
Wheaton, Illinois 60187.