

## The Church at Sardis

Scripture Text: Revelation 3:1-6

### About the Text:

- 1) Sardis is the fifth church to which chapters two and three of the book of Revelation are addressed.
- 2) The apostle John is the penman of these things, but Jesus is the author and spokesman.
- 3) The text takes the familiar form of the epistles.
  - a. Description of Jesus
  - b. What Jesus knew about the church.    c. Jesus' commands to the church.
  - d. What good was in the church, if any.    e. What they needed to do to overcome.

### History of the City

- 1) The city of Sardis was the capital of the Lydian empire founded out of the Hittite empire sometime in the 12th century B.C.
- 2) Coins were invented in this city in 660 B.C.
- 3) The city of Sardis was famous for three things:
  - a. Military might.
  - b. Its place on a trade route.
  - c. It's command of the plains of Hermus which were very fertile.
- 4) Sardis was located on an outcropping with a 1500 feet sheer drop around the cities edges.
- 5) Only a small land bridge connected the outcropping with the rest of the country.
- 6) The city was captured several times most notably by the Persians in the 6th century B.C.
- 7) The city was known for its dyed wools and carpets and fabulous wealth.
- 8) King Croesus was said to carry \$600,000,000 out of the city when Cyrus deposed him.
- 9) Croesus was conquered because he assumed that he was in an impregnable place.
- 10) But the Persians learned of a way to scale the cliffs.
- 11) When they arrived at the top, they found no one watching.
- 12) The city fell into obscurity when Constantinople become the dominate city of the region.
- 13) Today, there are only ruins.

## **I. THE WORKS OF SARDIS – A REPUTATION OF LIFE, BUT A PEOPLE THAT ARE DEAD.**

1. Jesus describes himself as He who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars.
  - 1) Seven – perfect and complete – Jesus was sinless (Hebrews 4:15).
  - 2) Seven spirits of God – Jesus perfectly represents God’s Spirit (John 1:1, 14).
2. Sardis had a reputation of life, but was dead.
  - 1) It is good to have a good reputation.
  - 2) Proverbs 22:1 “A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches...”
  - 3) But reputation isn’t everything. John 7:24 “Judge not according to appearance....”
  - 4) Sardis was spiritually dead. They appeared one way, but they were another.
  - 5) What killed Sardis spiritually? Sin.
  - 6) Sin is what killed the prodigal son described by his father as “dead” (Luke 15:24).
  - 7) Consider 1 Timothy 5:6 “But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.”
  - 8) The Christian cannot afford to “live” upon a good name only; he must continue to practice Christianity daily or he will die spiritually.

## **II. THE COMMAND TO THE CHURCH AT SARDIS – WATCH!**

1. They needed to wake up and start watching.
  - 1) Just as the city had been conquered in times past for a failure to watch, so also now the church was failing to watch.
  - 2) 1 Peter 5:8-9
  - 3) 1 Corinthians 16:13 “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.”
  - 4) 1 Thess. 5:6 “so then let us not sleep, as do the rest, but let us watch and be sober.”
2. Strengthen what remains.
  - 1) There were some at the church who were still alive, but were about to die.
  - 2) They needed to be strengthened; they needed to be edified.
  - 3) It is ultimately Christ who strengthens (Philippians 4:13).
  - 4) We must do our part in working with weaker brethren.
  - 5) Galatians 6:1
  - 6) James 5:19-20
3. Remember what you have received and heard; hold fast and repent.

- 1) Like all of the churches, the church at Sardis has received and heard the gospel.
  - 2) 1 Corinthians 15:1-4
  - 3) 1 Thessalonians 2:13
  - 4) They needed to remember what they had already heard, hold fast to it, and repent.
4. If they fail to watch, Jesus will come upon them as a thief.
- 1) Matthew 24:43
  - 2) 1 Thess. 5:2
  - 3) Revelation 16:15
  - 4) This won't be because they didn't know to watch, but because they ignored the command to watch.

### **III. THE HOPE OF THE CHURCH AT SARDIS**

1. They have a few names that have not defiled their garments.
  - 1) White garments are righteousness. Revelation 19:8
  - 2) These are the clothes that Jesus expects us to wear in His kingdom – Matt. 22:11-13.
  - 3) To defile such garments is to stop living a life of righteousness.
  - 4) It is to turn to a life of wickedness.
  - 5) At least some at Sardis were not living wickedly.
2. These shall walk with Jesus in white; they are worthy.
  - 1) White symbolizes purity and holiness.
  - 2) Hebrews 12:14
  - 3) 1 John 3:3
  - 4) 2 Peter 1:4
3. He that overcomes shall be clothed in white.
  - 1) White is also the color of triumph.
  - 2) Revelation 19:11
  - 3) Revelation 19:14
4. He that overcomes will not have his name blotted out of the book of life, but confessed before God.
  - 1) Philippians 4:3

2) Revelation 21:27

3) Jesus confesses those that confess him. Matthew 10:32-33.

We have seen in Revelation 3:1-6 . . .

1) The works of the church at Sardis – a reputation of life, but dead.

2) The command to the church at Sardis – watch!

3) The hope of the church at Sardis – stay clean and overcome!

Invitation

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