

# The Unveiling of Jesus Christ



The Letter to the  
Church in Sardis  
Revelation 3:1-6

Seven-headed Beast from the Luther Bible

# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

Revelation 3:1-6

Introduction

# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

## Revelation 3:1-6

## Introduction

- **Author:** Apostle John
- **Recipients:** Churches in the Roman Province of Asia
- **Place:** Patmos, a Greek Island
- **Year:** ~ 96 AD

# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

## Revelation 3:1-6

## Introduction

- John writes to seven different churches.
- Together, they make a quick course on what it takes to have a healthy church.
- They also show us how to identify a church when it is unhealthy.

# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

Revelation 3:1-6

Introduction























The Letter to the Church in Sardis

Revelation 3:1-6

About Sardis



# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

## Revelation 3:1-6

## About Sardis

- By the time of the Roman Empire, Sardis was already 1000 years old.
- It was the capital of the ancient kingdom of Lydia.
- It was also an important city when it was part of the Persian Empire.

# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

## Revelation 3:1-6

## About Sardis

- Gold and silver were both found in the area, which resulted in Sardis growing rich.
- Perhaps as a result, it was the place where modern coins were first produced.
- Like all cities in that world, Sardis had its temples.
- One was to Artemis, the goddess that was best known for her temple in Ephesus.

# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

Revelation 3:1-6

About Sardis

- Sardis was most famous for its military strength.
- Still, it was repeatedly conquered.
- The Cimmerians, the Persians, the Athenians, and Alexander the Great all overran the city.
- This was repeatedly due to the soldiers of Sardis feeling too safe.



# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

Revelation 3:1-6

About Sardis

- In 17 A.D. the city was destroyed by an earthquake but rebuilt with money from Rome.
- This was more proof that the wealth and military strength of Sardis were not enough to protect it.

Sardis

Temple of  
Artemis



simonjenkins' photos, CC BY-SA 2.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0>>, via Wikimedia Commons



# Sardis

Shops, Bath,  
Gymnasium



By Carole Raddato from FRANKFURT, Germany - View of the Byzantine Shops and the Bath-Gymnasium Complex, Sardis (Lydia), Turkey, CC BY-SA 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=75330320>



Sardis

Synagogue



By Carole Raddato from FRANKFURT, Germany - Sardis Synagogue, late 3rd century AD, Sardis, Lydia, Turkey, CC BY-SA 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=45906673>

Sardis

Acropolis



By Jona Lendering - Livius.org Provided under CC 0 license (notice under the photograph in the description page of the photograph)., CC0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=74580881>



# Sardis

## Acropolis



By Klaus-Peter Simon - This file has been extracted from another file: SardesBurgberg.jpg, CC BY 3.0,  
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=75229569>



# Sardis

## Acropolis: Citadel



By Ken Mayer - Flickr, CC BY 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=75230152>

# The Letter to the Church in Thyatira

Revelation 2:18-29      The Format of the Letter(s):

1. The Command to Write
2. Attribute(s) of Jesus
3. What's Right with the Church
4. What's Wrong with the Church
5. What They Need to Do
6. A Promise to the One Who Conquers (Switch)
7. The Personal Call to Anyone with an Ear (Switch)

# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

## Revelation 3:1-6

## Introduction



*The message to Sardis is a warning to all “great churches” that are living on past glory ... spiritual ministries often go through four stages: a man, a movement, a machine, and then a monument. Sardis was at the “monument” stage, but there was still hope!*

*– Warren W. Wiersbe  
(1929 – 2019)*



# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

Revelation 3:1-6

Introduction

- Let's now read the whole letter.

# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

## Revelation 3:1

# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

## Revelation 3:1

- The **seven stars**, we know, are the seven angels of the seven churches (**Rev 1:20**).
- The **seven spirits** are somewhat more difficult.



# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

## Revelation 3:1

- In **Zech 4**, the prophet sees a vision of seven lamps, which are then connected with the Spirit of God.
- **Zech 4:10**

These seven are the eyes of the LORD, which range through the whole earth.

# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

## Revelation 3:1

- In **Isaiah 11**, we also have this pertaining to the Messiah.

- **Isaiah 11:1-2**

1 There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,  
and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.

2 And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him,  
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
the Spirit of counsel and might,  
the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

## Revelation 3:1

- In the first four letters, Jesus started by saying something good about each church.
- Here he starts right in with a severe criticism.
- This church was not at all living up to its reputation.



# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

## Revelation 3:2

# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

## Revelation 3:2

- Sardis had fallen to invaders in the past when its soldiers slept.
- Enemy armies scaled its steep hillside and caught its armies off guard.
- In the same way, this church needed to wake up and get back to work.
- Spiritually, it was about to completely die.

# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

## Revelation 3:2



- In his commentary on Revelation, Chuck Swindoll gives us *Five Marks of Sick and Dying Churches*



# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

## Revelation 3:2



- Sign #1

A dead church worships its past.

# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

## Revelation 3:2



- Sign #2

A dead church is inflexible  
and resistant to change.

# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

## Revelation 3:2



- Sign #3

A dead church often has  
carnal and lazy leadership.



# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

## Revelation 3:2



- Sign #4

A dead church neglects children and youth.

# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

## Revelation 3:2



- Sign #5

A dead church lacks evangelistic and missionary zeal.

# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

## Revelation 3:2

- It is likely that the church in Sardis was once a very alive and Spirit-filled church.
- But those days were gone.
- The reputation remained, but the life was now lacking.



# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

## Revelation 3:3

# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

## Revelation 3:3

- This church already had everything it needed to be a strong and vibrant church.
- It just needed to remember what it had been given, wake up, and reverse its present course.

# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

## Revelation 3:3

- The coming of Jesus is supposed to be a comforting thought for believers.
- In **1 Thessalonians 4**, Paul reminds the church of the Lord's return and then says,
- “Therefore encourage one another with these words.”  
(**1 Thess 4:18**)



# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

## Revelation 3:3

- In this verse, Christ speaks of his coming to Sardis and it sounds more like a threat.
- A living church should always be looking forward to Christ's return.

# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

## Revelation 3:3

- Hebrews 9:27-28

And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

## Revelation 3:4



# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

## Revelation 3:4

- Evidently, not everyone in Sardis was part of the problem.
- Jesus knows those few who are faithful and will reward them accordingly.
- Even in the deadest church there may still be a few true believers.

# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

## Revelation 3:4

- Ginger and I both came out of very traditional church backgrounds.
- We did not come to an understanding of the gospel or to a personal faith in the normal context of church.
- And yet it happened.

# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

## Revelation 3:5

# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

## Revelation 3:5

- The **book of life** is mentioned **seven times** in the book of Revelation. This is the first time.
- This book contains the names of all the Lord's people.
- Their names are written there from the foundation of the world.



# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

## Revelation 3:5

- Revelation 13:8

And all who dwell on earth will worship [the beast], everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.

# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

## Revelation 3:5

- True believers, those who are victorious conquerors with Christ, will persevere in their faith.
- They will remain faithful till the end.

# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

## Revelation 3:5

- These are the ones who publicly acknowledge that they belong to Jesus.

# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

## Revelation 3:5

- Matthew 10:32-33

32 So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, 33 but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.



# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

## Revelation 3:5

- These believers will also wear white garments as members of the bride of Christ.

# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

## Revelation 3:5

- Rev 19:7-8

Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure.

# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

## Revelation 3:6

# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

## Revelation 3:6

- This is our usual reminder.
- What Jesus says to this church, he says to all the churches, and to us as well.



# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

Revelation 3:1-6

Conclusions

# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

Revelation 3:1-6

Conclusions



*All of the church's man-made programs can never bring life, any more than a circus can resurrect a corpse. The church was born when the Spirit of God descended on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), and its life comes from the Spirit ...*

*– Warren W. Wiersbe  
(1929 – 2019)*

# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

## Revelation 3:1-6

## Conclusions



*When the Spirit is grieved, the church begins to lose life and power. When sin is confessed and church members get right with God and with each other, then the Spirit infuses new life—revival!*

*– Warren W. Wiersbe  
(1929 – 2019)*

# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

## Revelation 3:1-6

## Conclusions

- The problem in Sardis was a sense of false confidence.
- Just as its soldiers felt safe in their fortress, which had a reputation for being strong, this church felt safe due to its good reputation.
- Its public image was not a good reflection of its lackluster reality.



# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

## Revelation 3:1-6

## Conclusions

- If a church begins to pay more attention to its outward image than to the substance of its spiritual life, it is in danger of becoming a dead church.
- If a church looks toward its past rather than its present and future, it runs the danger of becoming a dead church.

# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

## Revelation 3:1-6

## Conclusions

- When a church's members, especially its leadership, begin to think they have paid their dues and can now relax rather than maintaining a vibrant walk with the Lord, this church will begin to die.

# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

## Revelation 3:1-6

## Conclusions

- In other words, we must always pay attention to the substance of our Christian life and let our reputation take care of itself.

# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

## Revelation 3:1-6

## Conclusions



*As far as I can see in my study of the Scriptures, the church has a threefold objective: upward, inward, and outward. To put it another way, the church is here to exalt God, edify the saints, and evangelize the world.*

*– Greg Laurie,  
Pastor, Evangelist, Author*

# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

Revelation 3:1-6

Conclusions

- Revelation 2:7

To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.



# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

Revelation 3:1-6

Conclusions

- Revelation 2:11

The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.

# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

Revelation 3:1-6

Conclusions

- Revelation 2:17

To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.

# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

Revelation 3:1-6

Conclusions

- Revelation 2:26-28

26 The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, 27 and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father. 28 And I will give him the morning star.

# The Letter to the Church in Sardis

## Revelation 3:1-6

## Conclusions

- Revelation 3:5

The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels.