

Revelation 3:1-6 | “To The Church At Sardis”

Background on Sardis

Sardis was an important city because of its trade and commerce. There is archeological evidence for several large buildings including a gymnasium, temple to Artemis – one the 8 largest in the Greek world, and Jewish synagogue. There was very likely a large Jewish presence in the city that was unusually prosperous as Jews living in a Gentile city. The imperial cult was also prominent there.

Verse–By–Verse Notes

Verse 1

- * Christ introduces Himself as the One who is sovereign over His church “I hold the seven stars.”
- * Jesus goes straight into His criticism and rebuke of Sardis: “You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead.” They are in serious trouble.
- * Jesus doesn’t really say *why* they were dead, but the phrase “soiled garments” in verse 4 may be a reference to slipping back into the paganism of their surrounding culture – this is always a threat.

Verse 2

- * Christ’s call is to “wake up” – “be watchful” is probably a better translation because this church was not *asleep*, but *dead*. The exhortation to watchfulness is especially relevant to the history of Sardis because it had been captured twice by invading enemies because of lack of vigilance.
- * “Strengthen that which remains” – life is possible again. This is a call to revitalize the church at Sardis.

Verse 3

- * Christ calls Sardis to go back to the basics of being the church: worship, evangelism, discipleship, prayer, fellowship, and missions should be the biblical priorities of every church.
- * If Sardis doesn’t “wake up” and repent, Christ will come like a thief against this dead church.

Verse 4

- * “You still have a few names” – even in dead congregations, there are persevering people who walk in the purity of holiness and do not compromise with the influence of the surrounding culture, even though their church has.

Verse 5

- * Believers who conquer are forever secure. This is a serious call to life-long perseverance. The consistent testimony of the New Testament is that believers must endure until the end.
- * Serious warnings like this (“blot your name out”) are the means by which God enable and empowers the believer’s perseverance.

Verse 6

- * The oft repeated call to hear and respond to the message that Christ is sending His churches.

BIG TAKEAWAY: *We need to be on guard against having the appearance of life when in fact we are dead.*