

# The Revelation

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## Revelation 3:1-6 The Church of Sardis

### Introduction

- Some 700 years before John wrote this letter, Sardis was a great city. In truth, it was two cities. The name Sardis is plural. The city was in the very center of the Roman province of Asia. Along the edge of the Hermus valley rises Mt. Tmolus. Sardis sat on top of the mountain. It was as wealthy as any city in the ancient world. The ancient Greeks said that the rivers around the city were filled with gold accounting for the city's early wealth. Eventually, the city's wealth led the city to expand to the plain below, thus the two cities: one upper and one lower.
- It was not a Greek city like those on the coast. In fact, it was a very eastern, oriental, anti-Greek city. Its kings wanted its wealth to be openly displayed as was the oriental custom.
- Twice in its history the city fell because they were so confident behind their high walls, sitting on their mountain top, that they failed to place men in the watch towers and on the battlements. This happened once against the Persians and again when Alexander's heirs were fighting each other for control.
- By John's time the city was a shadow of its former self. The citadel on top of the mountain was a ruin. The gold was gone. The lower city survived as a center for the wool trade. It was said the dying of wool was invented there.

### Vs 1

- The seven spirits: refers to the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit found in Isaiah 11:2 s the completeness of the gifts of Christ.

- The seven stars: these are the seven churches and their angels (Rev. 1:16). The church is the possession of Christ and He holds each congregation in His hand.
- The accusation against the church in Sardis is that it is spiritually dead. Sin has crept into the church and sin always brings death – the death of the will, the death of initiative, the death of creativity, the death of feeling.

#### Vs 2

- The church in Sardis seems not to be threatened by heresy. People have to be actively thinking to come to heresy. Nor is there any perceived threat from the outside. The threat was that the church was so asleep, so lifeless, it wasn't worth attacking. Like the disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane, the church here needs to wake up and keep watch and finish what they start!

#### Vs 3

- The tense here in Greek is present imperative: "Keep on remembering! Remember every day! Never for a moment forget!"
- And repent! The failure of the city in battle was laziness and so too the failure of its church. This is why sloth is one of the Seven Deadly Sins! And why the road to Hell is paved with good intentions. Remember what Christ called you to be – AND BE THAT – and remember then what He called you to do -AND DO THAT – and stay with it! Otherwise you will be asleep when the judgement comes!

#### Vs 4

- It only takes a faithful few for there to be hope! Abraham bargained with God for Sodom because there were a faithful few. More than one Old Testament prophet lamented that he was the only faithful one left.
- Soiled garments: In the pagan world no one could approach a temple with soiled garments. In Ps. 24:3-4 only those who are clean and pure

may stand in God's holy place. In Persia, only the king's chosen walked with him in his gardens and wore his white robes.

Vs 5

- The 3-part promise to those who are faithful
  - They will be clothed in white garments (Matt. 13:43) as God is clothed (Ps. 104:2a); white robes were worn to show purity, when celebrating a victory, and at special festivities.
  - Not erased from the Book of life: Exodus 32:32-33; Ps. 69:28; Daniel 12:1; Phil. 4:3; Re. 20:15, 21:27. In the ancient world kings would often keep a census with every citizen's name and anyone found guilty of treason would have their name removed from the book.
  - Jesus as our advocate: Matt 10:32-33; Luke 12:8-9

Vs 6

- Not just a message for the church in Sardis, but for all churches, everywhere.