

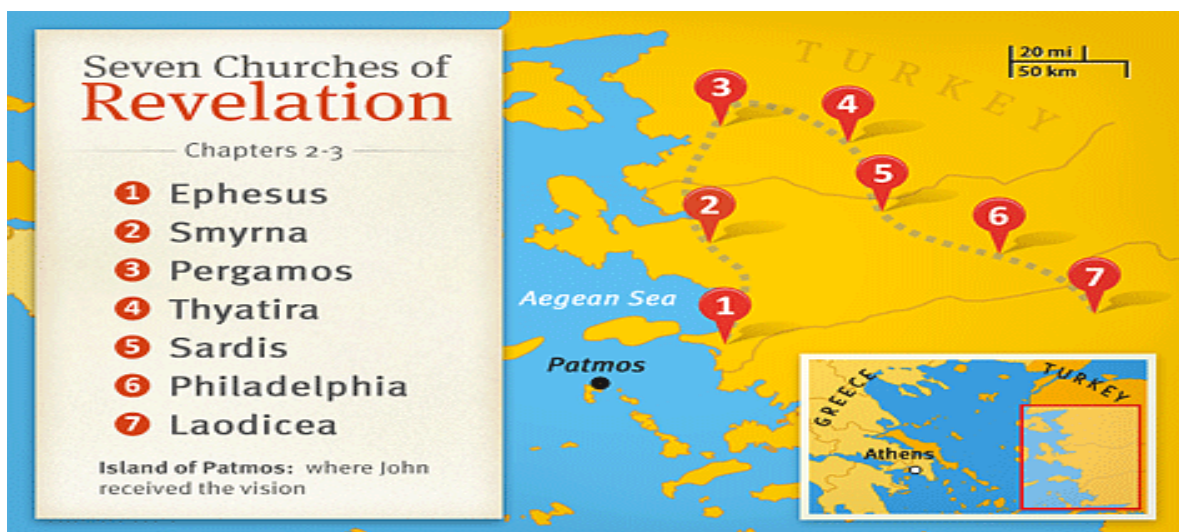
Studying the book of Revelation (8)

Concord Community Church

Jesus' letter to the church in Sardis

The Dead Church (Revelation 3:1-6)

Dated: 30/03/2025



A little background on the city of Sardis will help us understand the condition of this church.

- Sardis was the capital city of Lydia.
- It was founded about 1,200 BC.
- The original city sat on the top of a 1,500-foot-high plateau. There was one narrow road leading into the city. The other sides of the plateau were just steep cliffs. This made the city very safe and nearly impenetrable by invading armies.
- Gold and silver coins were first minted here.
- The city of Sardis was famous for the industries that operated there. Carpet, wool and dyed cloth were their primary products. It is said that the art of dyeing was invented at Sardis.
- At one time, Sardis had been one of the greatest cities in the world. It reached its zenith under King Croesus. King Croesus and Sardis were famed around the world for their wealth. In that part of the world, it is still common to hear the phrase, "***As wealthy as Croesus***".

- While Sardis reached its zenith under Croesus, it also fell under his reign. He and the people of the city became complacent in their wealth, their power and their city's apparent invincibility. When that region where Sardis was located came under attack by Cyrus the Persian, King Croesus and his people retreated to their city, believing they were safe. One night, one of the Persian soldiers saw a Sardinian soldier drop his helmet over the wall of the city. He watched as that soldier followed a hidden path down the side of the mountain to retrieve his helmet. When nightfall came, Cyrus and his troops followed the hidden path up the side of the mountain, entered the city while the guards slept and conquered Sardis.
- Sardis regained some of its former wealth under the reign of Alexander the Great, but was invaded and defeated by Antiochus the Great, who also entered the city at night while the guards slept.
- When the Romans came, Sardis was still a wealthy, powerful city, but it was just a shell of its former self. In John's day, Sardis was just a shell of what it had been. The people had grown lazy, degenerate, immoral and complacent. Sardis was dying through apathy and indifference.
- The city was proud of its past; it was proud of its reputation. But its reputation was all it had left. For all intents and purposes, the city of Sardis was dead, even while it lived.

Apparently, the church in Sardis had adopted the atmosphere of the city. The church had become a thermometer that registered the temperature of the city instead of a thermostat that changed the temperature of the city. It is to this church that had become lazy, apathetic and complacent that the Lord Jesus comes. Just as surely as the city of Sardis was dying, so was the church of Christ in that city. Jesus has no words of praise and appreciation for them, but He does have some words of counsel. I would like for us to look at our Lord's words to this dying church. There is a word of warning for us in these verses as well.

Before we study Jesus's Words to this church, lets keep some questions in mind:

- Why was it important for the church of Sardis to hear that Jesus knows their works?
- What criticism does Jesus give this church?
- What does it mean that they are dead? How can a church be dead?
- What would cause a church to die?
- Could there be some individual believers within a church body that is mostly dead?
- Did this church look dead?

- What warning should we take from this?
- How can we ensure that we are alive spiritually?
- What advice did Jesus offer this church?
- How does a church or an individual believer wake up?
- What can church leaders do to wake up and keep their congregation awake spiritually?
- What does Jesus say is the way to wake up?
- What would happen if the church doesn't wake up?
- What application can you personally make from this?
- What does it mean to soil one's garments?
- How can we walk with Him?
- What specifically do the believers in Sardis need to conquer?
- Where will the white garments come from?
- What is the Book of Life mentioned here?
- What does it mean that their name will not be blotted out from the Book of Life?
- Will someone's name be blotted out from this Book?
- What other promise does Jesus make to the one who conquers?

"Wake Up! A Call to Spiritual Revival" Revelation 3:1-6

The letter to the church in Sardis is a sobering message from Jesus Christ. Unlike other churches that received commendation for their faithfulness, Sardis is mostly rebuked for being spiritually dead. This is a call for revival, a warning against complacency, and an invitation to walk in true spiritual life.

Many today struggle with spiritual lethargy—churches appear vibrant with activities, programs, and services, yet they lack the fire and power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus calls us to wake up before it's too late!

1. A Church with a False Reputation (Verse 1)

"And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, 'These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: "I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.'"

◆ **Christ's Authority:** Jesus introduces Himself as the One who holds the *seven Spirits of God* and the *seven stars*. The seven Spirits represent the fullness of the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 11:2), and the seven stars symbolize the church leaders (Revelation 1:20). This shows that Jesus has all authority over His church.

◆ **The Problem:** The church in Sardis had a **name** (reputation) of being alive, but in reality, they were spiritually dead. They looked good from the outside—perhaps they had crowds, religious activities, and a good name in society—but inwardly, they were lifeless.

◆ **Application:**

- **Are we more concerned with outward appearances than true spiritual health?**
- **Are we living off past victories instead of walking in fresh obedience to Christ?**

📖 **Matthew 23:27** – *Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for looking righteous on the outside but being full of dead men's bones inside.*

📖 **2 Timothy 3:5** – *They have a form of godliness but deny its power.*

True life comes from **abiding in Christ** (John 15:4-5). If we are disconnected from Him, we may appear alive but have no real spiritual power.

2. The Call to Wake Up and Strengthen What Remains (Verse 2-3)

"Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God."

◆ **Be Watchful!** Jesus commands them to wake up! The city of Sardis had been invaded twice in history (549 BC and 214 BC) because its guards were asleep. Likewise, the church had become spiritually careless.

◆ **Strengthen What Remains:** There was still hope! Some remnants of faith and truth remained, but they were **on the verge of dying**. They needed revival before it was too late.

📖 **Romans 13:11** – *"It is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed."*

 **1 Peter 5:8** – *"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion."*

◆ **Jesus' Judgment of Their Works:** He says, *"I have not found your works perfect before God."* This means their deeds were incomplete, lacking true devotion, and done for show rather than from the heart.

 **Isaiah 29:13** – *"These people draw near with their mouths and honour Me with their lips, but have removed their hearts far from Me."*

👉 **Is our service to God just routine, or is it full of faith and devotion?**

"Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore, if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you."

◆ **Remember & Repent:** Jesus calls them to remember how they first received the Gospel and to return to that passion. The solution to dead faith is not more activity, but true repentance and return to God's Word.

 **Psalms 51:10** – *"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me."*

◆ **A Warning of Sudden Judgment:** If they refuse to repent, Jesus says He will come upon them **like a thief**—suddenly, unexpectedly, and in judgment.

 **Matthew 24:42-44** – *"Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming."*

👉 **Are we spiritually awake, or are we asleep like Sardis?**

3. The Faithful Remnant (Verse 4-5)

"You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy."

◆ **Not Everyone Was Dead!** Even in a spiritually dead church, there were still a few faithful believers. These individuals had not **defiled their garments**—meaning they remained pure in faith and obedience.

 **James 1:27** – *"Pure and undefiled religion before God is this: to keep oneself unspotted from the world."*

◆ **They Will Walk in White:** White garments symbolize purity, victory, and eternal life. Jesus promises those who remain faithful will walk with Him in glory.

📖 **Revelation 19:8** – *"And to her (the bride of Christ) it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints."*

"He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels."

◆ **Three Amazing Promises to Overcomers:**

1. **They will be clothed in white garments** (purity and victory).
2. **Their names will not be blotted out from the Book of Life** (assurance of eternal life).
3. **Jesus will confess their names before the Father and angels** (He will acknowledge them as His own).

📖 **Matthew 10:32** – *"Whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven."*

👉 **Are we walking in purity, or have we allowed compromise?**

4. The Final Call to Listen (Verse 6)

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

This message is not just for Sardis—it is for every believer and church today.

Hebrews 3:15 "Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts".

👉 **Are we listening to what the Spirit is saying?**

👉 **Are we awake, watching, and strengthening our faith?**

👉 **Will we be among the overcomers who walk with Jesus in white?**

Reflection: Why do many people think they are saved, but aren't? How can we test ourselves and make sure that we are alive spiritually? Some things do not prove or disprove salvation. Here are some things that do not **show a person** is saved and alive in Christ:

- Attending church
- Taking communion
- Baptism
- Tithing
- Singing worship songs
- Prayer
- Calling oneself a Christian
- Reading the Bible.

And here are some things that are evidence of genuine belief:

- Walking in the light (1 John 1:6-7)
- Confessing sin (1 John 1:8-2:1)
- Keeping His commandments (1 John 2:3-4)
- Loving the brethren (1 John 2:9-11)
- Pursue holiness (1 John 3:3-4)
- Having the Holy Spirit (1 John 4:13, 5:10-11)
- Having good fruit (Matthew 7:17)
- Loving God (John 14:15, 1 John 5:3)

(This list is from the John MacArthur Study Bible).

To be alive, we must objectively have real faith (John 5:24). And if the faith is real, it will be followed with action (James 2:14-26).

Conclusion: A Call to Action

- 🔥 **Wake up!** —Recognize our true spiritual condition.
- 🔥 **Strengthen what remains!** —Renew our faith and commitment.
- 🔥 **Repent!** —Turn away from complacency and return to our first love.
- 🔥 **Remain faithful!** —Be part of the remnant that overcomes.

Jesus promises eternal life and victory to those who endure. Are you ready to wake up and follow Him wholeheartedly?