

Chapter Six

The Things Which Are

(Revelation 2:1 – 3:22)

I. The Church. (3:1)

I. Sardis (The Dead Church)

A. History of Sardis

- 1) The city stood on the Pactolus River, 48-50 miles east of Smyrna.
- 2) Sardis became famous as the capital of Lydia and its powerful and wealthy kings.
- 3) Sardis was situated at the junction of the royal highways which linked Ephesus, Smyrna, and Pergamum. They were also a center for wool production and the garment industry. Sardis claimed they discovered how to dye wool.
- 4) Lydia at that time was a very wealthy country, due mainly to the gold that came from the Tmolus Mountains that was carried down in the form of gold dust by the Pactolus River which flowed through Sardis.
- 5) The last of the Lydian kings was Croesus; he reigned from 561 to 546 B.C. he was defeated by Cyrus the Great of Persia.
- 6) Sardis, under the rule of Croesus, was thought to be a secure fortress. Because of this they failed to fully protect the wall they thought was impregnable.
- 7) They became unwatchful and arrogant, they did not guard the part of the city that they considered safe, and paying little attention to the possibility that there was a weakness.
- 8) It is said that a man named Hyroeades wanting to claim the reward that King Cyrus promised to the man who would be the first to scale the wall went there to observe when he saw a Lydian soldier descend the wall to retrieve his helmet that rolled down and climb back up.

9) Having seen this, an attack was planned for the night when possibly these soldiers were sleeping instead of being on guard, they were surprised by the thief in the night. The city was ransacked.

10) In 133 B.C. Sardis was bequeathed into the hands of Rome by King Attalus III.

11) False worship in Sardis included the worship of Cybele (**Goddess of nature**) which eventually was taken over by Artemis. Caesar-cult was strong also in 17 A.D.

12) The Artemis temple had 78 columns which were around 58 feet high and was approximately 160 by 300 ft.





Sardis excavations from acropolis



Sardis from acropolis

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II. The Correspondent. (3:1a)

I. These are the words of him

A. Who holds the seven spirits of God

The descriptions of the divine author in each of the seven letters are drawn from the vision of 1:12–17. The letter to Sardis draws an additional component from the salutation in 1:4, where the phrase seven Spirits also appears. That phrase may refer to Isaiah 11:2, where the Holy Spirit is described as “the Spirit of the Lord ... , the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.” It may also refer to the symbolic depiction of the Holy Spirit as a lampstand with seven lamps (a menorah), presented in Zechariah 4:1–10. In either case, the reference is to the Spirit’s fullness. Jesus Christ is represented in His church through the Holy Spirit. ¹

B. And the seven stars (**the ministers of the churches – Rev. 1:20**)

¹ MacArthur's New Testament Commentary: Revelation 1-11
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III. The Compliment. (3:4)

- I. Because the church was dead He skips the normal compliment temporarily and goes right into his concern, but for the sake of this bible study we will cover it now.
- II. Even though Jesus declared this church dead He has not forgotten the faithful few.
- III. There are a few people who have not soiled their clothes.
- IV. They will walk with me.
- V. They will be dressed in white. **(They were used for festivities or celebrations)**
- VI. They are worthy

IV. The Concern. (3:1c,2b)

- I. He knows their deeds.
- II. You have a **reputation** of being alive, but you are dead. **(Death came from within; they had an outward appearance that fooled men. All they had was a name)**
- III. He has not found their deeds complete in the sight of His God. **(Possibly going thru the motions)**

Let's look at an example in scripture

The Old Testament hero Samson provides an apt illustration of the Sardis church's dilemma. Despite his spectacular feats and his amazing strength, his life came to a sad and tragic end. The temptress Delilah "pressed [Samson] daily with her words and urged him" (**Judg. 16:16**) to reveal to her the secret of his strength. Eventually, after "his soul was annoyed to death" (v. 16) by her constant prying, Samson told Delilah the truth. She cut his hair, and he lost his great strength, not because of the haircut, but because of his disobedience to God. Then came the saddest moment of the entire tragic story. The Philistines came to seize Samson and, unconcerned, he went to deal with them. They, however, captured him, bound him, and put out his eyes. Tragically, Samson "did not know that the Lord had departed from him" (v. 20). Though he was the same man, with the same name, his power was gone. The result for Samson was imprisonment, blindness, humiliation, and, finally, death. So also the church at Sardis, once spiritually alive and strong was now blind and weak, not realizing that God had long since departed.²

² MacArthur's New Testament Commentary: Revelation 1-11
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V. The Cure. (3:2a, 3) (For spiritual restoration)

I. Wake up!

II. Strengthen what remains and is about to die. (**Spiritual realities**)

III. Remember what you have received and heard. (**Needed to go back to the truths of God's word**)

1 Timothy 6:20-21 (NKJV) ²⁰O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane *and* idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge— ²¹by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith. Grace *be* with you. Amen.

IV. Obey it

V. Repent

A. If you don't wake up I will come as a thief and you will not know at what time I will come to you.

VI. The Counsel. (3:5-6)

I. **He who overcomes** will be dressed in white.

II. I will never blot out his name from the **book of life**.

III. I will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels.

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