

8 - THE LETTER TO THE CHURCH OF SARDIS (REVELATION 3:1-6)



I. Destination (Revelation 3:1a)

A. The Recipient

- Christ addressed the pastor of the church in Sardis.

Historical Note: Sardis

Sardis was an ancient Greek city located in the Roman province of Asia in Asia Minor. Sardis was the capital of the ancient kingdom of Lydia. The city was the seat of a proconsul under the Roman Empire. The city was located about 48 kilometers southeast of Thyatira, on an important trade route that ran east and west through the kingdom of Lydia. Sardis discovered the secret of separating gold from silver, thereby producing both metals of a purity never known before. This was an economic revolution which made Sardis rich and synonymous with wealth itself. For this reason, Sardis is famed in history as the place where modern currency was invented. Important industries in Sardis included jewelry, dye, and textiles. From a religious standpoint it was a center of pagan worship and site of a temple of Artemis. Archeologists have located the ruins of a Christian church building next to the temple.

B. The Description of Christ

1. Seven Spirits

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- Christ gives direction to the Holy Spirit.

Scripture John 16:13 (ESV)

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.

2. Seven Stars

- Christ has authority over the pastors of the churches.

II. Commendation

- It is noteworthy that Christ did not commend them for anything.

III. Rebuke (Revelation 3:1b)

A. Christ's Knowledge of the Church

- Christ has an intimate knowledge of the church.

B. Their Testimony

1. Their Appearance

- The church had a reputation for being alive.

2. Their Actual Condition

- Christ exposed the church as being dead.

IV. Exhortation (Revelation 3:2-3)

A. Be Watchful (Revelation 3:2a)

- Christ tells them to be alert.

B. Strengthen (Revelation 3:2b)

- Christ calls them to strengthen the few evidences of their Christian life.

C. Remember (Revelation 3:3a)

- Christ calls them to remember the gospel.

D. Hold Fast (Revelation 3:3b)

- Christ calls them to holdfast in obedience.

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E. Repent (Revelation 3:3c)

- Christ calls them to acknowledge and turn from their sin.

F. The Warning (Revelation 3:3d)

- Christ tells the church that His judgment will come unexpectedly.
- This coming does not refer to the second Coming but rather Christ's coming judgment.

V. Promise (Revelation 3:4-6)

A. Clothed in White (Revelation 3:4-5a)

- Christ promises that those who endure will be clothed in righteousness.

Biblical Notes: White Garments

The phrase "clothed in white" means to be set apart for God. It also pictures that a believer has been cleansed from sin. It also signifies that the believer is morally and spiritually pure. Being clothed in white is symbolic of the believer being clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

See: Revelation 3:5; 3:18

B. The Book of Life (Revelation 3:5b)

- Christ promises that those who endure are assured salvation.

Biblical Notes: The Book of Life

The Book of Life refers to the heavenly registry of those who have experienced salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

See: Exodus 32:32-33; Psalm 69:28; Daniel 12:1; Philippians 4:3; Revelation 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12,15; 21:17,19.

C. Confession before the Father (Revelation 3:5c)

- Christ promises that those who endure will be acknowledged.

D. The Exhortation (Revelation 3:6)

- We are called to acknowledge what the Holy Spirit reveals to us.