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Revelation

**Revelation 03:01-06**  
**THE CHURCH IN SARDIS**

*THE DOLDRUMS IS A PART OF THE OCEAN NEAR THE EQUATOR. IT IS AMAZINGLY CALM WITH LIGHT, BREEZY WINDS. THE WEATHER IS HOT AND EXTREMELY GLOOMY. THE OLD SAILING VESSELS, WHEN CAUGHT IN THE DOLDDRUMS, WOULD LIE HELPLESS FOR DAYS AND SOMETIMES WEEKS, WAITING FOR THE WIND TO BEGIN TO BLOW.*

**I. BACKGROUND**

A. The city of Sardis was wealthy but wicked!

1. It was the ancient capital of Lydia and situated in a very fertile agricultural valley.
2. It was the home of the famous Aesop (of Aesop's Fables) and King Croesus.
3. The name "Sardis" means "escaping ones" or "those who come out."
4. Many scholars believe that this church symbolically represents the **Reformation Period from about 1517 A.D. to 1750 A.D.**
  - a) The Reformation was a time when many people were fed up with the church in Rome.
  - b) A time when men like Luther, Knox, Wycliffe, and Zwingli decided to **be** among "those who came out" and stood for the Truth - and broke away from the Roman church.
  - c) It was the time of Luther's "Ninety Five Theses" being nailed to the Wittenburg church door in Germany.
  - d) It was a time of The Augsburg Confession, The Thirty Nine Articles, The Heidelberg Confession, and The Westminster Confession.
  - e) It was also the time when King James brought together the most brilliant scholars of the time to translate the ancient manuscripts into the King's English!
  - f) The King James Bible – was started in 1604 and published in 1611.
    - (1) It was a time when "the remnant" was crying out for reform!

B. *The combination of easy money and a loose moral environment made the people of **Sardis** notoriously soft and pleasure loving. "The great characteristic of Sardis was that, even on pagan lips, Sardis was a name of contempt. Its people were notoriously loose-living, notoriously pleasure-and luxury loving. Sardis was a city of the decadence."*  
(William Barclay)<sup>1</sup>

C. **Jude** spoke of a certain group in the church who - for all intents and purposes - would call themselves Christians and would be amongst the church's gatherings.

1. But he describes them as "empty shells", looking good on the outside, but no real conviction to live for the Lord
  - a) **Jud 1:12-13 NKJV** **These are spots (rocks) in your love feasts, while**

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<sup>1</sup> Guzik, D. (2013) [Revelation](#). Santa Barbara, CA: David Guzik (David Guzik's Commentaries on the Bible), p. Re 3:1a.

they feast with you without fear (respect for the Lord), serving only themselves. They are clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots; **13** raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.<sup>2</sup>

- (1) They were “**professors without practice**” — *Jamison. Faucet, Brown*
2. Such are many of the folks in the church at Sardis!
- Unfortunately, instead of these “imitation Christians” being in the minority, they had grown in number.
  - They were now heads of boards, perhaps even pastors, elders, and deacons, and leadership in general.
  - On the outside, the church looked good! But inside it was dead!
- (1) **Mat 23:27-28 NKJV "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. (28) Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.**
- (a) Sardis was “The Church of the Dead Orthodoxy”

ORTHODOX = (adjective) “A conforming to established teaching.”

ORTHODOXY = (noun) “The quality or state of being orthodox.”

## II. **REV 3:1 NKJV "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.**

- A. Once again, the title the Lord uses - is significant to His address of this church!
- “He that has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars.”**
  - I want to remind you that we already know from **Rev. 1:20** that **the “seven stars” are the angels of the seven churches.**
  - The **seven spirits** mentioned here - may simply reference the spirits of these seven angels in charge of the seven churches. (Messengers – Pastors/Leaders?)
    - Or it may reference the “sevenfold” ministry of the Holy Spirit mentioned in **Isaiah 11:2**
      - The Spirit of the Lord, Spirit of wisdom, Spirit of understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, and fear of the Lord.
  - As we have said before, seven in the Word is a symbol of completion or perfection. (The Lord Rested on the 7<sup>th</sup> day.)
  - One thing we do know for sure is that this is speaking of the fullness of God’s Holy Spirit!
    - Therefore** we can conclude with accuracy - that the Lord is holding this dead church responsible for pushing the Holy Spirit out of their church!

<sup>2</sup> [The New King James Version](#) (1982). Nashville: Thomas Nelson, p. Jud 13.

B. **I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.**

1. The name of the church in Sardis was probably something like: "The Holy Ghost – Baptized in the Spirit – Apostles and Prophets – Movers and Shaker's congregation of what's happenin' now – in Christ's humility church"
2. It is also likely that every Christian in town knew the name of this church!
3. The church in Sardis was very active and very busy, and if anyone came by to visit they would have sworn it was the best church in town!
4. Pastors probably felt comfortable referring their people - who were moving into this city - to the church in Sardis. It had a good name!!!
  - a) No doubt they were one of the largest congregations in town. They had money. They had outreaches. They had missions. They had concerts. They had potlucks. They had a large staff, and most likely a pastor for every group in the church.
  - b) Everyone thought the church in Sardis was wonderful, - everyone that is – except for the Lord!
    - (1) **1Sa 16:7 NKJV** But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."
  - c) "The Holy Ghost – Baptized in the Spirit – Apostles and Prophets – Movers and Shaker's congregation of what's happenin' now – in Christ's humility of Sardis" was the envy of every pastor within 100 miles. BUT THE LORD JUDGED THEM AS DEAD!!!

*"The church of Sardis was at peace—but it was the peace of the dead."* (William Barclay)<sup>3</sup>

III. **REV 3:2 NKJV BE WATCHFUL, AND STRENGTHEN THE THINGS WHICH REMAIN, THAT ARE READY TO DIE, FOR I HAVE NOT FOUND YOUR WORKS PERFECT BEFORE GOD.**

A. The word PERFECT as used here means "finished" or "completed"!

1. These folks had a name *among men* but not before the Lord!
  - a) Having a name in the Christian community is not the same as having a name before the Lord!
2. We often make the mistake of thinking that we can earn God's favor (or maybe it's the favor of others) by works.
3. The reality is that when we are filled with God's Holy Spirit, "works" are just the outflow of that relationship!
  - a) AND we are not concerned with who is watching.
  - b) **Isa 29:13 NKJV** Therefore the Lord said: "Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths And honor Me with their lips, But have removed their hearts far from Me, And their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men,
    - (1) These scriptures here in **Isaiah** – speak of being a man-pleaser instead of a God-pleaser!

<sup>3</sup> Guzik, D. (2013) [\*Revelation\*](#). Santa Barbara, CA: David Guzik (David Guzik's Commentaries on the Bible), p. Re 3:1d.

- (2) This kind of person: and even this kind of church may look wonderful on the outside, but when the Lord looks them over, they work are found “imperfect” or incomplete!
- 4. You can’t get any more “perfect” than the cross.
  - a) When we begin to trust in anything other than the Lord, we are found wanting!
  - b) The Lord exhorts Sardis to watch and strengthen what they have because it’s about to die.
    - (1) Faith is like a muscle, if exercised it grows, if not, it atrophies and dies!
    - (2) **Mat 13:12 NKJV For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.**

**IV. REV 3:3 NKJV 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.**

- A. Do you remember “how” you received and heard the Good News of salvation?
  - 1. **1Co 2:1-5 NKJV And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. (2) For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. (3) I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. (4) And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, (5) that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.**
  - 2. Do you remember how you received the message of salvation as a “babe” with such simplicity and childlike faith?
  - 3. Do you remember how simple it was? Hold on to that!!!
  - 4. And with childlike faith watch and wait for His return!
    - a) Many of us have gotten so pre-occupied with living life we don’t want Him to return right now.
    - b) I read one commentator that said you can tell the spiritual condition of a person by how they respond to the Lord’s return.
      - (1) The closer they are to Him the more excited they are to have Him come back.
      - (2) Can you say MARANATHA! This morning?

**V. REV 3:4 NKJV 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.**

- A. The word **few** is “small, slight, little”!
  - 1. There will always be a few, small, little, insignificant remnant who will be faithful to the end!
  - 2. The white garments of heaven have always been reserved for a minority.
  - 3. The road to heaven is not narrow to exclude people. It is narrow because few

people travel it!

**VI. REV 3:5 NKJV 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.**

- A. Once again I find it necessary to quote **1Jn 5:5 NKJV** **Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?**
- B. **Mat 10:32-33 NKJV** **"Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. (33) But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.**
  - 1. Jesus is what and who makes us "acceptable" to the Father and heaven!
  - 2. As we have said before from **2Pe 3:9 NKJV** **The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.**
  - 3. **Joh 3:17 NKJV** **For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.**
  - 4. Could it be that ALL of mankind's names are written in the Book of Life when Jesus formed us in our mother's womb.
  - 5. It is only later, when we chose to follow the world rather than Jesus that our name is "blotted out"!
    - a) That would certainly explain why children that die young - need no repentance. Their name is already written!
    - b) How about you? Is your name written in The Lamb's Book of Life?
    - c) Or has sin entered the camp separating you from the Lord?
      - (1) Will the Lord have to blot it out or have you accepted Jesus' forgiveness?

**VII. CONCLUSION**

- A. **Rev 3:6 NKJV** **"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."**
  - 1. Do you hear with your heart this morning?
  - 2. Do you have a relationship with the Lord?
  - 3. If so, is it still alive? Do you remember "HOW" you first heard and responded?
- B. Are you still in love?