

# THE BOOK OF REVELATION: VERSE BY VERSE

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## WEEK SEVEN

### I. THE MESSAGES TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES (Revelation 2:1 - 3:22)

#### A. The Repeating Pattern Of The Messages

1. A description of the character of Christ.
2. A description of what Christ knows about each church, with a word of commendation for their strengths and a word of rebuke for their sins of commission and omission.
3. A call to repentance, with a warning of consequences if they don't repent.
4. A description of the reward promised for faithfulness and overcoming.

#### B. The Message To The Church In Sardis (3:1-6)

1. The historical context of Sardis:
  - a. A city of 60,000 – 100,000 people.
  - b. It was the most ancient of all the cities, having been founded in 1200 BC.
  - c. In the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC, it was considered to be one of the most beautiful and powerful cities in the world. It had everything: climate, location, culture, economy, and wealth. By the first century AD, however, it had declined (but not in the minds of its citizens.)
  - d. It was built upon a 1500 foot acropolis, with cliffs on three of the four sides. It had a reputation of being impenetrable as a city. However, it had been conquered twice because the city was complacent, failing to see raiders climbing up the cliffs.

2. The specific message to the church in Sardis:
  - a. Beginning with a description of the character of Christ:

***"To the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars." (v. 1a)***

- i. ***"The seven spirits of God"***: symbolic language for the Holy Spirit; seven representing divine fullness.
- ii. ***"The seven stars"***: represents the seven angels representing the seven churches, (1:20).

- b. Then followed by a description of what Christ knows about the church:

- i. Christ changes the order and begins with a word of rebuke...

***"I know your deeds; you have a reputation for being alive, but you are dead." (v. 1b)***

- 1.) They had taken on the nature of the city in which they lived.

ii. Christ then calls for repentance and action...

***"Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have found your deeds unfinished in the sight of my God. Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; hold it fast, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you."*** (vv. 1b-3)

- 1.) ***"Wake up!"***: literally *"Become watchful!"* (Remember the city's history of complacency!) They were not wracked by suffering from without, no heresy lingering within, no rumours of immoral decay. Yet they were completely blind to the danger they were in.
- 2.) ***"Strengthen what remains..."***: There was hope; there were faint embers that could be rekindled.
- 3.) ***"I have found your deeds unfinished in the sight of my God"***: they were easily distracted; they had no piercing vision or motivating mission. They were coasting...
- 4.) ***"Remember therefore what you have received and heard; hold it fast and repent."***: Not just a call to recollection, but a call to action.
- 5.) ***"If you do not repent I will come like a thief..."***: Again, remember the history of this city!

iii. Thirdly, a word of commendation...

***"Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy. The one who is victorious will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out the name of that person from the book of life, but will acknowledge that name before my Father and his angels. Whoever has ear, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches."*** (vv. 4-6)

- 1.) ***"They will walk with me, dressed in white... The one who is victorious will, like them, be dressed in white..."***: Likely an allusion to the Roman triumphal procession, where citizens lined the streets in white garments as the conquering hero marched by.
- 2.) ***"I will never blot out the name of that person from the book of life..."***: See Exodus 32:32-33; Psalm 69:28; Philippians 4:3; Revelation 21:17