



## The Book of Revelation: Week 7

### Sardis:

### Living Off Your Reputation

#### Media & Notes at:

[www.htchurch.com/revelation](http://www.htchurch.com/revelation)

#### Video also available at:

[www.htchurch.tv](http://www.htchurch.tv)

### Review

- Jesus commissioned John to write to seven churches in Asia Minor.
- These letters give us instruction for the last days, and to help us become overcomers. In each letter, Jesus either praises the church, or rebukes the church, or both. He makes promises to those who overcome, and He gives warnings to people who persist in wrongdoing.

### Sardis

*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. 2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. 3 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.*

*4 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. 5 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. 6 “ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. (Revelation 3:1-6 NKJV)*

- As we will see shortly, this was a church that had known the Lord's life and power. Things had, however, changed in Sardis.
- At one time Sardis was the capital of one of the most wealthy kings in history, named Croesus. But Sardis kept declining for centuries, all the way down into the time of the Roman Empire and had even been destroyed by an earthquake. Sardis was built on soft soil, and so it was unstable.
- The people had a reputation for bad morals, and this might have been why Jesus said that there were a few people there who had not soiled their garments.

**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.**

- As Jesus inspects the churches and their leadership, he possesses all of the wisdom and insight of the Holy Spirit. He's not fooled by whatever pretense they're making of spiritual life, or going through the motions.
- The fact that Jesus has the Spirit to distribute to the churches means that He is able to set those churches on fire with the fire of revival once again if they repent.
- Holding the seven stars, Jesus is emphasizing that he owns the church.

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Once again Jesus says he knows the works of the church. But it doesn't sound like a very enthusiastic endorsement.

- He says you have a name that you are alive but really you're dead. The Church been living off its reputation. They were well-known for their spiritual vitality.
- There had been great revival in the area. All Asia Minor, had heard the Word.
- What a terrible risk for all Spirit-filled churches! Churches go from being “packed out” to being “plagued out.”
- There is always the risk that we will stop welcoming the Holy Spirit into our individual lives, and grow cold and dead without his flame.
- Sardis was close to a major *necropolis*, a city of the dead. If we don't stay in step with the Spirit, we can also become a city of the dead!

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

- Jesus says to be watchful; actually the Greek says to ***become*** watchful. This is an interesting clue for us. King Cyrus of Persia had captured the City of Sardis due to their overconfidence and lack of preparation.
- When we think are secure, when we have a false sense of security, then we are no longer careful about what we do.
- Sardis, as we mentioned, was an unstable place because the rock wasn't good. Things that are unstable in our Christian lives come from being double minded.
- Do I even know why I am engaging in this particular action, or pursue, or ministry? If I grow to become of two minds about my service, I will quickly become uninterested in it, grow cold, and ready to die.

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Don't be double minded anymore about what God has commanded you to do!

Jesus said he had not found their works **perfect** before God. What it means is that their works were not complete. They had not finished doing what God had called them to do. In Sardis there was a famous temple to the goddess Diana or Artemis, but it was famous for being unfinished. Are we "learning from the lackadaisical?"

Interesting also is that Jesus says He didn't find their works to be **perfect before God**. It's important to know that our works must be done as unto the Lord.

**3 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.**

- Jesus does not say remember **what**, he says remember **how** you received and heard. How do we receive and hear well?
  - First, by hearing with faith.
  - We also need to receive with an obedient heart.
  - We also need to receive with a heart that is zealous.
- The way to recover is to hold onto the things that you're still doing well, but then take inventory of your life. Repent of any area in which we are not responding with faith, obedience, and zeal to the Word and the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

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If we don't watch, He says he will come upon us like a thief. Does this mean that we could suffer the loss of salvation, or have to go into the Day of the Lord?

- Not necessarily, but certainly there are many other ways in which we can miss the Lord. Maybe not the loss of salvation, but the loss of what God intended to give you in His love. What a tragedy it is to miss God's best.

**4 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.**

- Jesus always notices the efforts that we make to keep ourselves pure, and unspotted from the world.
- It is possible to live godly! The church as a **whole** might have only had a name, yet Jesus knew some people who had a **real** name, and a **real** reputation.
- Jesus says those people are going to walk with him in white. We will be dressed differently and not identically in the kingdom of heaven. Your life will determine your wardrobe and your rank in the nobility of heaven.

**5 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. 6 “ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.**

- White garments in the ancient world stood for celebration and joy. *"Let your garments be always white, and let not oil be lacking on your head."* (Ecc. 9:8)

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- White also stands for purity, and so Jesus is giving you recognition.
- The Bible holds up to us as an example people like Lot: *[if God] delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)— then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. (2 Peter 2:7-10a)*
- Jesus says that if we overcome He will not blot us out of his book. “Jesus doesn’t sit up in Heaven all day with a busy eraser.” If you overcome, your name will be held in honor as a conqueror.
- He also says that he will confess us in front of the Father and in front of the Father’s angels. Just as we have confessed him, He will gladly confess us!
- He closes out the letter by saying again that if we have an ear, we need to hear what the Spirit saying to the churches.
- Be very practical about examining yourself. It might amaze us to see how many things there are that pull our hearts away from serving Him with gladness.
- He can set us on fire one more time!

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