

# Revelation

## The Church at Sardis

### ■ ORIENTATION:

- Sardis was situated in the middle of Hermus valley, at the foot of Mount Tmolus, a steep and lofty spur which formed the citadel.
- The old city was built on a rock hill which rose 1500 feet above the plain.
  - It was inaccessible from all directions except the south.
- Today, the site is located by the present day village of *Sart*, near Salihli in the Manisa province of Turkey, close to the Ankara - Izmir highway (approximately 72 kilometers from Izmir).
- The part of remains including the bath-gymnasium complex, synagogue and Byzantine shops is open to visitors year-round.

### ■ EARLY HISTORY:

- Two occasions the city was caught off guard and captured when a band of soldiers scaled the “inaccessible” heights.
  - The city was captured by the Cimmerians in the 7th century, by the Persians and by the Athenians in the 6th, and by Antiochus III the Great at the end of the 3rd century.
- Two occasions the city was caught off guard and captured when a band of soldiers scaled the “inaccessible” heights.
  - In the Persian era Sardis was conquered by Cyrus the Great and formed the end station for the Persian Royal Road which began in Persepolis, capital of Persia.
- During the Ionian Revolt, the Athenians burnt down the city.
- Sardis remained under Persian domination until it surrendered to Alexander the Great in 334 B.C..

- Once at least, under the emperor Tiberius, in 17 AD, it was destroyed by an earthquake; but it was always rebuilt.
- It was one of the great cities of western Asia Minor until the later Byzantine period.

## ■ **THE CHURCH:**

- The church had a reputation of being a vigorous active church.
- It had fooled others but the Lord knew the truth of their condition.
- In this address, the Lord has more to say to rebuke them than any other book except to the Laodiceans.

## ■ **THE LORD'S SELF-DESIGNATION**

- "He who has the seven Spirits of God"
  - The fullness of the Spirit.
- "...and the seven stars"
  - The angels of the seven churches.

## ■ **CONDEMNATION**

- They have a name that they are alive, but they are dead.
  - What was dead about the church?
  - There was no indication of persecution or trouble from outside forces.
- They have a name that they are alive, but they are dead.
  - What was dead about the church?
    - Perhaps they were silently compromising the truth and therefore not attracting any persecution?
      - "look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean" (Matthew 23:27)."
- Their works have not been found perfect before God.
  - Fulfilled, finished or complete. (1 Peter)
  - They had not finished what they have started.

- They had started the race but weren't going to finish. (1 Cor 9:24)

## ■ WARNING

- Be watchful...
  - Literally, "Be awake and on watch; be what you are not."
- ...and strengthen the things which remain and are ready to die.
  - Become a strong fortress for the Lord. (Matt 13:35-37; 1 Cor 16:13)
  - They had been conquered before for not guarding ALL avenues of approach.
- Remember how they had received....
  - Not likely the manner which they received it.
  - Most likely the finality of the message.
    - The "Truth" once delivered... (Jude 3)
- ...and heard
  - They received the Gospel as God's message for salvation. (Rom 10:17)
- Hold fast....
  - Continue to obey the truth that had been delivered.
- ...and repent...
  - Change their mind
  - Go back to the enthusiasm
    - First Love.....
- If they don't watch, ....
  - If they don't heed his warning
  - If they don't guard themselves on all fronts.
- .....the Lord will come upon them...
  - Bring his judgement.
    - Come quickly....(I.e. Pergamos)
- .... as a thief
  - Without warning just as they were conquered before.

## ■ COMMENDATION

- There are few names in Sardis who have not defiled their garments.
  - Again, Christ speaks to the church in terms they can understand.
    - Sardis was famous for its manufacturing and dyeing of delicate woolen stuffs and carpets.
    - Thus the reference to linen
- They shall walk with Him in white,
  - White is a symbol of purity.
  - Because they are “white” they will...
    - Obtain the highest reward.
    - There was a Roman custom of the “Cavalcades of nobles all in white” that marched through the streets of Rome.
      - They should have been familiar with the custom of Triumph.
- ..for they are worthy.
  - Not because of what they did or deserve.
  - Because they are washed in the Blood of the Lamb.
  - Because they had endured and won the victory.
  - They are found worthy of sharing victory with the Lord.

## ■ PROMISE AND EXHORTATION

- He who overcomes...
  - Shall be clothed in white garments
    - Dressed in pure robes of eternal life (7:13-14)
  - The Lord will not blot his name from the Book of Life
    - Maintain his name as heir to Heaven.
    - Maintain citizenship in the Kingdom.
    - Stands justified before God.
    - Saved Eternally....
    - If the name can be blotted out then is there such thing as “Once Saved Always Saved”?

- The Lord will confess his name before My Father and His angels
  - Acknowledge as His own
    - Purchased with His blood
    - Faithful
    - True
  - He can just as easily deny.....
- Hear what the Spirit says to the churches

## ■ LIFE APPLICATION:

- Does our outward appearance reflect our fruits?
  - Our conduct.
  - Our speech.
  - Our appearance
    - Our attire
    - Our poise (I.e. Ester)
- What is the attitude behind our works?
  - Is it for show?
  - Is it to win arguments?
  - Is it to glorify God?
  - Is it to save souls?
  - Is it to work our own salvation?
- Sardis was conquered because....
  - They weren't watchful
    - The Disciples falling asleep in the garden.
  - They didn't strengthen their positions. (Acts 20:28-31)
    - Study.
    - Prayer.
  - They let their guard down!