

**JOHN'S LETTERS TO THE CHURCHES IN ASIA**  
**Lesson #5 - "Sardis, The Lifeless Church," Revelation 3:1-6**  
**Dr. Greg Tyree, BBC, Wednesday Bible Study, August 4, 2004**

**INTRODUCTION:**

We have seen that: 1) Ephesus, the *Leaving Church*; 2) Smyrna, the *Loyal Church*; 3) Pergamos, the *Liberal Church*; and 4) Thyatira, the *Lusting Church*". Today we will look at Sardis, the "lifeless church".

Sardis means "Escaping Ones," or "those who come out," describing well the Reformation Church. Sardis was located thirty miles S.E. of Thyatira in a plain watered by the river Pactolus. It was the capitol of Lydia. The very ancient Lydian rule was conquered by Cyrus, and from the Persians it went into the hands of Alexander the Great. This rule lasted from 300 BC to 214 BC. Then it was sacked by Antiochus the Great, from there it went to the kings of Pergamos, and finally to the Romans.

In the time of Tiberius it was desolated by an earthquake in 17 AD, along with eleven other Asian cities. According to Pliny it was famous for dying wool. The art was invented there. Silver and gold coins were first minted there. It was at one time a slave market. The deity worshipped there was the goddess Cybele. According to R. Tuck, the city is now in ruins, "just a village of paltry huts" called Sart. However, there are still remains, such as 60 feet high columns, 6 1/3 feet in diameter.

No heresies are mentioned. There is no life there to produce them. McClaren tells us, "better the heresies of Ephesus and Thyatira than the acquiescent deadness of Sardis". It was not corrupt, but dead! Thus, no persecutions! The Reformation made two great mistakes:

- 1) It became a State Church.
- 2) It maintained too many customs of the Roman Church.

Note that Smyrna and Philadelphia receive no blame and Sardis and Laodicea receive no praise.

The purpose of this letter is to show us that it is not enough just to avoid corruption, we must be a living church, doing good works for God. Carrying out its commission for the church!

**PROPOSITION:** We will notice that there are at least five divisions in this passage in Revelation.

**I. CONSIDER THE OBSERVANCE. Vs. 1.**

A. Note the Origin of the Message.

1. He Has the Seven Spirits.

2. He Holds the Seven **Stars**.

B. Note the **Omniscience** of God.

1. See the **Revealing** of their Works.

2. See the **Reputation** of their Church.

## II. CONSIDER THE **ORDERS**. Vs. 2.

A. Note the **Command**.

1. **Wake** Up!

2. **Watch** Out.

3. **Work** Out.

B. Note the **Condemnation**.

1. See the **Incapacitated** People.

2. See the **Incomplete** Works.

## III. CONSIDER THE **OPPORTUNITY**. Vs. 3.

A. Note the **Way** of the Opportunity.

1. **Remember**.

2. **Retain**.

3. **Repent**.

B. The **Warning** in the Opportunity.

1. The **Unwatchful** Eye.

2. The **Unwanted** Thief.

3. The **Unexpected** Time.

## IV. CONSIDER THE **OBEDIENT**. Vs. 4.

A. Note the **Righteous**.

1. They Were a **Small** group.

2. They Wear a **Spotless** Garment.

B. Note the **Reward**.

1. They **Walk** in White.

2. They are **Worthy**.

## V. CONSIDER THE **OVERCOMERS**. Vss. 5, 6.

A. Note the **Identification**. Vs. 5.

1. See the **Clothing** of the Overcomer.

2. See the **Confidence** of the Overcomer.

3. See the **Confession** of Christ.

B. Note the **Instruction**. Vs. 6.

1. See the **Discernment** of the Spirit's Message.

2. See the **Destination** of the Spirit's Message.

## **CONCLUSION:**

"Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments". What then is the teaching of such an expression?

1. It is possible to be true and faithful under the most discouraging circumstances. Of course, how much better should we live in the most favorable circumstances?
2. In the worst conditions, there may be some redeeming features. Also true is the antitheses: In the best conditions, there may be some repulsive deformities.
3. God never confounds the Godly few with the ungodly many. Neither shall the ungodly few escape for the sake of the godly many!

So let's take these words of hope, and allow them to breathe into us life sufficient for a church that will please God!