

THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION

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Mission Statement

This study of the Book of Revelation gives special attention to the testimony it provides concerning our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Rev 19:10; cp. 1:2), leading us to worship and serve Him in everything.

- I. What you have seen (Rev 1).
- II. What is now (Rev 2–3)—the seven churches of Asia Minor.
 - A. Ephesus (2:1–7)
 - B. Smyrna (2:8–11)
 - C. Pergamum (2:12–17)
 - D. Thyatira (2:18–29)

- E. Sardis (3:1–6)

Sardis served as the capital of the Lydian empire as early as 1200 B.C. It is located about 60 miles inland from Ephesus and Smyrna on the Pactolus River from which the ancient Lydians mined gold and minted it into coins. Melito, a well-known bishop in the second century A.D., lived at Sardis. Geographically imposing, the founders placed the acropolis of the city upon an impressive hill, but it is a hill of mud, not of rock. Wind and rain have carved the surrounding soft hills into a variety of curious shapes. In its lower city, they constructed a large temple to Artemis/Diana (goddess of the hunt, the moon, and fertility). In later centuries a church building occupied the same site. In the second century the Romans built a large bathhouse complex of over five acres that included a gymnasium for exercise. A synagogue in Sardis is one of the largest ancient synagogues excavated in the Roman world, providing evidence for a significant and influential population of Jews.

For all of its appearance geographically, architecturally, and politically, Sardis was the city of death. It possessed appearance without reality and provided promise without performance. Due to its careless confidence, the church at Sardis displays a lack of watchfulness in spiritual matters.

1. Characterization of Christ (v. 1a)

- He possesses power and authority over the seven Spirits of God and over the seven messengers of the churches (see 1:4, 16; 2:1).

2. Commendation from Christ

- He does not commend the church at Sardis for anything.

3. Complaint by Christ (vv. 1b, 2)

- He complains that the church at Sardis holds to a dead orthodoxy (cf. 2 Tim 3:5).
- He complains that the church at Sardis has failed to complete their works for Him.

4. Counsel from Christ (vv. 2–3a)

- He counsels the church at Sardis to wake up to spiritual reality.
 - ▶ Croesus and Cyrus (549 B.C.); Antiochus the Great (195 B.C.).
- He counsels the church at Sardis to strengthen what they have left.
- He counsels the church at Sardis to remember the teaching they had received.
- He counsels the church at Sardis to keep/obey the teaching they had received.
- He counsels the church at Sardis to repent of their deadness and failures.

5. Caution by Christ (vv. 2a, 3b)

- He warns the church at Sardis that they are about to die.
- He warns the church at Sardis that He will come and judge them when they least expect Him (cf. Matt 24:43; 1 Thess 5:2; 2 Pet 3:10).

6. Commitment of Christ (vv. 4–5)

- The worthy few at Sardis will walk with Christ and be dressed in white.
- The names of the overcomers at Sardis will not be erased from the book of life.
- Christ will confess the overcomers' names before the Father and His angels.

7. Practical Implications

- Carelessness and a lack of urgency can benumb a church's spiritual life.
- Spiritually immature believers can come to dominate a church and bring it to the point of going out of existence (dying).
- A lack of knowing and obeying the teachings of the Word of God results in a spiritually sleeping church.
- Spiritual slumber results in a fleshly and worldly spirit in the church.

Questions for Discussion

- a. How does _____ fail to complete works for Christ?
- b. What does _____ need to do in order to awaken from spiritual slumber?

Implications Regarding Jesus Christ

- ▶ He has authority over the Spirit of God.
- ▶ He has authority over the leaders of the churches (and over the churches).
- ▶ He knows His church's works.
- ▶ He knows His church's spiritual condition.
- ▶ He calls His church to repent.
- ▶ He can come at any time to judge His church.
- ▶ He rewards the faithful few even in a dying church.