

SARDIS **REAL LOVE**

I. BACKGROUND

A. Geographical/Commercial/Political

1. Located: 30 miles southeast of Thyatira
50 miles due east of Smyrna
2. Fertile river valley and converging point of several inland roads
3. Formerly: Capital of an old, wealthy kingdom overthrown by the Persians in 546 B. C. Later conquered by Alexander the Great and then the Romans.
4. Earthquake: 17 A.D. devastated the city; it was rebuilt but never regained its former glory.

B. Spiritual

1. Large Temples to Artemis/Diana, Cybele and the Roman Emperor Tiberius

C. Other

1. None Other Than Revelation 1

II. THE LETTER TO SARDIS: Rev. 3:1-6

A. Who Sent It: Rev. 3:1

1. Christ

2. Description:

a. Him Who Holds

1. Seven Spirits

a. Usual Interpretation: Holy Spirit

- Why use the phrase "seven Spirits" if there is only one Holy Spirit?

There are two ways to understand this imagery:

1.) In Isaiah 11:2, the prophet Isaiah describes the Holy Spirit's

relationship to the Messiah in terms of seven key features:

the Spirit of the Lord, as well as the spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge and fear of the Lord.

Some scholars refer to this as the sevenfold Spirit of the Lord – a way to understand the Spirit in the fullness of His power and work.

2.) Others believe it is a reference to Zechariah's prophetic vision of the

Holy Spirit as a golden lampstand made up of seven lamps.

Zechariah 4:1-10.

Christ describes Himself as the One who possesses what this Church needs most – the Holy Spirit and faithful leaders. Without the Holy Spirit and faithful leaders, this Church was as good as dead.

b. To every minister, to every church, the Holy Spirit is given. The Spirit is not withdrawn from them unless they forfeit it, just like individual believers.

2. Seven Stars: Represents the Seven Churches

B. Strength

- I KNOW

1. Reputation: for being Alive

a. It had acquired a Name

b. Nothing said about false doctrine or other problems

- c. It's Reputation may have been Honestly Acquired
- d. It may once have been a Living, Vital Church
- 2. Interestingly, this letter stands out in some ways for what it does not say. There is no mention of persecution, bad theology or false teachers, compromise, or any specific sin corrupting the Church. Some scholars assume some or all of these issues were present. But Christ simply says the worst thing that could be said of a Church – “You’re dead”.
- C. Weakness
 - You Are Dead (Spiritual graveyard)
 - 1. Distinguish Reputation and Reality
 - a. 1 Samuel 16:7 – “. . . the Lord looks at the heart”
 - b. What humans see/What God sees
 - 2. Hints At What Was Happening
 - a. Rev. 3:2 – “. . . your works are not complete. . . . ”
 - 1. Routine, but did not fulfill God’s purposes
 - 2. You never finish what you start
 - b. Rev. 3:4 – “. . . people. . . who have not soiled their clothes. . . . ”
 - 1. Soiled --- Sin had taken root
 - 2. Not obvious to outsiders
 - 3. Christians in Name Only
 - a. Isaiah 29:13
- D. Christs’ Warning v. 2-3
 - 1. Wake up
 - 2. Otherwise I will come like a thief – a warning of imminent judgment
- E. Christs Command v. 2-3
 - 1. Strengthen – salvage any virtue and godliness that still remained
 - 2. Remember – the spiritual truth they had received
 - 3. Obey – James 1:22
 - 4. Repent – turn from their current course
- F. Christs’ Promise v. 4-6
 - 1. Walk in White – a few followers remained but they were so few in number that they did not impact the Lord’s assessment that the Church as a whole was dead. However, their unsoiled garments represent godly character and purity. Revelation 7:14.
 - 2. Book of life

III. SIGNS OF DEATH IN THE CHURCH

- 1. Worship Of the Past
- 2. Greater Concern With Form Than Life
- 3. Love Of Tradition Over Love For Christ
- 4. Inflexibility and Resistance to Change in non-Core Issues
- 5. Loss of Evangelistic and Missionary Zeal (The Focus Turns Inward)