



Learn Your Bible

Resources to help you learn and understand the Bible

Short Study 061: Letters to Seven Churches 4 – Sardis

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Read Revelation 3:1-6

Introduction: The citizens of Sardis were confident in the safety in their citadel, situated high on an unclimbable cliff. However, their confidence relapsed into complacency and they left it unguarded. In the 4th Century BC, Persians scaled the cliff through a fissure and took the citadel. Two centuries later, Greek soldiers took the same route and conquered it again. What warning in this letter suggests the members of the Church at Sardis had not learned the lessons of history?

1. The sender. One who “has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars” (v1). ‘Seven’ occurs a lot in the Book of Revelation. It suggests completeness. See what you can find out about the meaning of this phrase, using commentaries on verses where ‘seven Spirits’ occurs.

2. Commendations. Sadly, Christ found nothing to commend in this church as a whole. Was there yet a glimmer of hope for their survival (see verses 2 and 4)?

3. Problems.

(i) *Inadequate works* (v2). We are not saved by works (Eph 2:8), so why does it matter?
(ii) *Despite their good reputation, they were lifeless* (v1). William Barclay referred to them as ‘lethargic’, lacking in vitality. In what ways do you think this might manifest itself? (Refer to commentaries if this helps)?

4. Warnings and what they must do.

(i) *Further deaths may ensue* (v2). What should they do (verses 2 and 3)?
(ii) *Christ may come unexpectedly* (v3). They will need to watch (v2). How can they (and us!) do this?

5. Promises. Despite the Lord’s disappointment with this church, the letter carries several gracious promises to the faithful:

(i) *Some will “walk with (Christ) in white”* (v4). Who will these be (v4)?
(ii) *Others will be given white garments* (v5). Who will these be (v4)? See what you can find out about “white garments” in Scripture.
(iii) *The names of those people will not be erased from the Book of Life* (v5). See Rev 21:27 but contrast Rev 20:15 to see the gravity of having one’s name erased.
(iv) *Christ will confess those people’s names to the Father* (v5), i.e. acknowledge (see Matt 10:32).

To think about: Is there something in my spiritual life that once shone brightly but I have become too sleepy to realise it is fading? If so, read verse 2 again and take note.

To dig deeper: List what else Scripture exhorts us to be alert from and to watch for (e.g. Matt 26:41; Acts 20:29-31; Rom 13:11; 1 Cor 16:13; 1 Peter 5:8.)