

“ Alive But Dead: Sardis ”  
(Rev 3:1-6)



Truth Matters Church, Inc.

# Reminder of Context



- ❧ John was exiled to Patmos by Domitian
  - ❧ Christian persecution began with Nero (54-68AD) continued through
  - ❧ Domitian (81-96AD)
- ❧ On the Lord's Day (Weekly Sabbath) John was given this great vision
  - ❧ 95/96 AD
- ❧ This entire book was a message to the 7 1<sup>st</sup> century churches
- ❧ Was given the command of what to write and not what to write
- ❧ In this great vision John sees the glorified Son of Man standing in the middle of 7 golden lampstands holding 7 stars in His right hand
- ❧ John was given the interpretation of this great vision
  - ❧ 7 golden lampstands = the 7 churches
  - ❧ 7 stars = 7 angels assigned over those churches

# Reminder of Context



- ❧ John describes the attire, features, and characteristics of the glorified Jesus
- ❧ All of which was descriptive of Jesus evaluating and judging the 7 churches, as well as, the impending judgment and destruction to those who refuse to believe and obey the gospel of Jesus Christ
- ❧ John in obedience to the vision writes what he was commanded to write
- ❧ Part of the command was to write to each of these 7 churches along with the 7 angels assigned over those 7 churches
- ❧ So each letter is an epistle which makes Revelation unique among other Scripture
- ❧ Revelation is 1 book with 7 epistles within it
- ❧ We've approached our study by viewing these as 7 individual epistles
- ❧ We've covered the first 4 of those epistles, here's a reminder of what we learned

	1: Ephesus	2: Smyrna	3: Pergamum	4: Thyatira
JESUS'S EVALUATION	Deeds, toil, perseverance	Tribulation and poverty, but are rich	Satan's throne and dwelling place	Deeds, greater than at first, love, faith, service, perseverance
	Tested apostles and found them to be false	Slandered by professed Jews and are a synagogue of Satan	Held fast and did not deny the faith	Tolerated Jezebel, self proclaimed prophetess
	Persevered, endured, and not grown weary	Do not fear about impending suffering	Held to the teaching of Balaam (put a stumbling block before Israel)	Jezebel lead believers astray to commit immorality and eat food sacrificed to idols
	Left first love ( <b>apostasy begins</b> )	Devil will cast some into prison	Ate food sacrificed to idols and committed immorality	Those who refused to repent of her will be thrown into <b>great tribulation</b>
	Called to repent and return	Tribulation for 10 days	Called to repent for <b>Jesus is coming quickly</b>	Her children will be killed and churches know this is God's judgment on them
	Hate deeds of Nicolaitans	Be faithful until death	Jesus will make war with those who refuse to repent	Those who reject her are to hold fast until Jesus comes
PROMISE	Overcomers will eat of tree of life in Paradise of God	Overcomers will not be hurt by 2 <sup>nd</sup> death and instead receive a crown of life	Overcomers will be given hidden manna, a white stone with his new name written on it	Overcomers will be given authority over the nations and the morning star

# The Seven Churches of Revelation



# A brief look *in Scripture*: Sardis



- ❧ 4 of 7 churches: Smyrna/Pergamum/Sardis/Philadelphia are not directly mentioned apart from Revelation
  - ❧ Only Ephesus, Thyatira, Laodicea
- ❧ All 7 churches are in ancient Asia Minor so what we can do is look for clues for the 4 not mentioned
- ❧ Like Smyrna and Pergamum (we've covered already), it's possible that this church was founded upon
  - ❧ The preaching of the apostle Peter
  - ❧ The preaching of the apostle Paul
  - ❧ Believers were scattered and settled there due to Nero persecution
  - ❧ The preaching of John

# A brief look *in History*: Sardis



- ❧ Modern day Sartmustafa, Manisa province in western Turkey
- ❧ Sardis was capital of the Lydian Kingdom
  - ❧ 1180-547BC
- ❧ In the OT, the Lydians would be “the people of Lud” (1Chr 1:11)
- ❧ Before the Lydian Empire, Sardis was occupied and ruled by the Hittites
- ❧ The Lydian Empire was ultimately conquered by the Persians



# A brief look *in History*: Sardis

☞ During the 1<sup>st</sup> century, the city had a gymnasium, here are its features:

3

## **The Palaestra**

In this large (six hundred by one hundred fifty feet) open area in front of the Marble Court, physical education was done on the sand floor. Smaller rooms around the outside were also used for physical training, conditioning (weights and calisthenics), skill development (discus, javelin, jumping), and cardiovascular training (running). Also in these rooms the students relaxed with massage and oil treatments after their exercise and classroom learning.

## **The Didaskelion**

Located on the outside of the open area, this school for academics provided rooms in which students learned and recited lessons. There were three levels of education: elementary (boys and girls ages five through twelve who studied reading and writing); secondary (boys and girls ages twelve to sixteen who studied philosophy, math, science, and music); and advanced (boys sixteen through adulthood who studied philosophy, medicine, music and science).

## **The Marble Court**

This three-story, colonnaded courtyard was dedicated to the cult of the Roman emperor, believed to be the guardian of the truth being taught and exemplified in his life. All learning was devoted to him. Many niches in the walls served as pediments for statues. In the main apse was a statue of the emperor, who was honored with sacrifices and ceremonies during the educational process.

## **The Bath Complex**

In the western section was the largest pool, the heated caldarium. East of this was a large, central hall and the warm pool (tepidarium). A nearby oblong hall held the cold pool (frigidarium) where students completed their bathing. There were also fountains in niches in the walls.



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# A brief look *in History*: Sardis



- ❧ In addition to the gymnasium, it had a theatre (about 20k capacity), a stadium (about 12k capacity), an aqueduct
- ❧ Like the other 4 churches, there were temples erected
  - ❧ Roman emperors: Augustus, Tiberius, and possibly Vespasian
  - ❧ Artemis: was in ruins, but being rebuilt at the penning of this book



# A brief look *in History*: Sardis



- ✧ In 17 AD, there was a destructive earthquake that destroyed the city and underwent an extensive rebuild under Tiberius (ruled 14-37AD) who provided substantial funds and tax relief
- ✧ It's because of such a gesture that Sardis erected a statue of Tiberius calling him "the Founder of the city"



# A brief look *in History*: Sardis

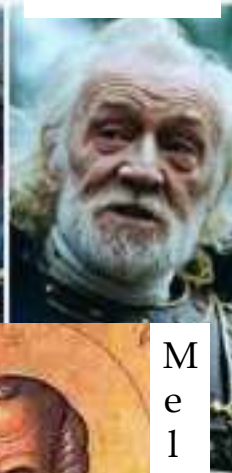
- ✧ The most popular early church father of the church in Sardis was Melito who in 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD wrote an apologetic defense to Christianity to then emperor Marcus Aurelius
- ✧ Melito's work and writings may have helped influence the eventual legalization of Christianity in the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD (under Constantine)



Verus



Aurelius



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# A brief look *in History*: Sardis

FUN FACT #1:

✧ About 200 years after Revelation was written, Sardis was known for a famous synagogue (~1k capacity) which is believed to be the largest in ancient history adjacent to gymnasium (was formerly used as public baths)



# A brief look *in History*: Sardis



## FUN FACT #2:

- ☞ The oldest coin in world history is the “Lydian stater”
- ☞ With Sardis as its capital, it is believed that coinage as currency began there



# Scripture Reading



Revelation 3:1-6 (NASB)

1 "To the angel of the church in Sardis write:

He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars, says this: 'I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. 2 Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God. 3 So remember what you have received and heard; and keep it, and repent. Therefore if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you. 4 But you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. 5 He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. 6 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

# Exposit 3:1



1 “To the angel of the church in Sardis write: He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars, says this: ‘I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.

- ✧ “To the angel (aggelos)”
- ✧ Jesus 1<sup>st</sup> addresses the angel over Sardis and declares that He
- ✧ “has the seven Spirits”
  - ✧ Is not merely symbolic to mean complete
- ✧ And has “seven stars” = 7 angels
- ✧ Does the 7 Spirits = 7 angels?



# Exposit 3:1



∞ I say No because later in Rev 4:5:  
Revelation 4:5-6 (The Throne of GTF)  
5 Out from the throne come flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder. And there were **seven lamps** of fire burning before the throne, which are **the seven Spirits of God**; 6 and before the throne there was something like a sea of glass, like crystal; and in the center and around the throne, four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind.

∞ “seven lamps” = “7 Spirits of God”

∞ These are distinct from the 7 angels or 7 stars in Jesus right hand





# Exposit 3:1



## SPOILER:

- ✧ The 7 Spirits of God (or 7 Lamps) who are before the throne are the 7 angels who will be given the 7 trumpets after Jesus breaks the 7<sup>th</sup> Seal in Rev 8
- ✧ Further proof that these 7 angels are distinct from the 7 angels or 7 stars over the 7 churches

## CASE IN POINT:

- ✧ So in v. 1 there are a total of 14 distinct angels mentioned
- ✧ And all 14 angels are under the authority of the glorified Son of Man
- ✧ Let's look at the last half of v.1...



# Exposit 3:1



1 “To the angel of the church in Sardis write: He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars, says this: **‘I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.**”

- ✧ “I know (oida)” at the time John wrote these letters, the assessment and evaluation has already been made in ch.1
- ✧ “deeds” can be rendered works or behavior
- ✧ “name” is “onoma” which means depending on context can mean your name, authority or cause



# Exposit 3:1



- ❧ “alive” is the verb ‘zaō’ which means to live
- ❧ In context, the church in Sardis had some level of influence and reputation of being alive among the dead or ruins
  - ❧ Remember Sardis was in ruins because of a great earthquake in 17AD
  - ❧ And since that time, they may have had a reputation of being alive among the dead or ruins that remained
- ❧ Jesus is full aware of such things, but He says “you are dead”
- ❧ “you are” is in the present tense
- ❧ “dead” is ‘nekros’ which means a corpse



# Exposit 3:1



## QUESTION:

- ❧ Can one be described as dead and still be saved?
- ❧ Why or why not?
  - ❧ Support it with Scripture



# Exposit 3:1



## QUESTION:

- ❧ Can one be described as dead and still be saved?
- ❧ Why or why not?
  - ❧ Support it with Scripture
- ❧ I say NO and I'll let Paul take this one:



# Exposit 3:1



Ephesians 2:1-10 (NASB)

1 And you **were** [past tense] dead (nekros) in your trespasses and sins, 2 in which you **formerly walked** [past tense] according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. 3 Among them we too all **formerly lived** in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we **were dead** in our transgressions, **made us alive** together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and **raised us up with Him**, and **seated us with Him in the heavenly places** in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

# Exposit 3:1



- ☞ All this is to say there were some among the church who were part of the assembly, had a reputation of being alive, but as when we look at the reverse of Eph 2, is still dead in trespasses and sins, is continuing to walk according to the course of this world, according to spirit of Satan who is working in the sons of disobedience
- ☞ There were some among the church in Sardis who continued to live in the lusts of the flesh, indulging the desire of the flesh and mind, and being dead, remain children of wrath – even as the rest
- ☞ So I don't think those called dead were saved



# Exposit 3:2



In mercy, Jesus admonishes them in v. 2...

2 Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God.

- ☞ “wake up” is ‘grēgoreō’ which means to watch and be alert
- ☞ “strengthen” is ‘stērizō’ means to firmly establish
- ☞ “the things that remain” - what are those “things”?
- ☞ For whatever those things are Jesus warns “were about to die”
- ☞ CLUE: it’s in the immediate context



# Exposit 3:2



- ❧ “the things that remain” – are the unfinished deeds or behavior because Jesus said at the end of this verse “I have not found **your deeds completed** in the sight of My God”
- ❧ TRUTH: We can fall short of the deeds or works that God has set before us
- ❧ Whatever those unfinished things were to the church in Sardis were about to die – not completed
- ❧ Coincidentally, the Eph 2 passage I just referenced, speaks on this very thought too: 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **for good works (deeds)**, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.
- ❧ Although the church in Sardis had some level of authority or influence, the good works set before them is about to die and go unfinished because of sin
- ❧ As such Jesus reminds them in v. 3...

# Exposit 3:3



3 So remember what you have received and heard; and keep it, and repent. Therefore if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you.

- ❧ “remember” is what it means in the Greek, call to mind, bear in mind, exercise your memory
- ❧ In order for their deeds not to go unfinished and die, they were exhorted to remember, bear in mind, exercise their memory on what they “have received and heard”
- ❧ What was it that they received and heard?

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- ✧ What was it that they received and heard? I’ll allow Paul and John to answer this...

# “received” and “heard”



Phi 4:9	1Th 2:13	1Jn 1:1-3
<p>9 The things you have learned and <b>received and heard</b> and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.</p> <p>What did the Philippians receive and hear?</p>	<p>13 For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you <b>received</b> the word of God which you <b>heard</b> from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.</p> <p>What did the Thessalonians receive and heard?</p>	<p>1 What was from the beginning, what we have <b>heard</b>, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life – 2 and the life was manifested, and <b>we have seen and testify and proclaim to you</b> the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us – 3 what we have seen and <b>heard</b> we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.</p>

# Exposit 3:3



- ❧ So in the beginning of v. 3, Jesus is commanding them to repent and remember the gospel they received and in the Word of God by which they stand proclaimed to them by God's holy apostles!
- ❧ TRUTH: Part of repentance is bringing to remembrance what we have been taught and learned concerning the gospel
- ❧ APPLICATION:
  - ❧ Are you in a spiritual sleep or slumber?
  - ❧ Are you in a spiritual rut?
  - ❧ Are you not feeling to great of a Christian?
  - ❧ Then remember what you know and learned about God, the gospel and the Word of God, and act on that memory in repentance and devotion to our Lord! Whatever unfinished deeds is before us will be taken to completion!
- ❧ Last half of v.3...