

### Revelation Chapter 1 is the Introduction.

John on the Isle of Patmos, encounters God and is mandated to write the visions of what he sees in a book and to send it to the 7 churches of Asia.

He has a stunning face to face encounter with Jesus to begin the book and pronounces a promise in verse 3: "Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it." Rev. 1:3

### The Letters to the Seven Churches are found in Chapters 2 and 3

#### The Seven Churches

- Number of completion - likely represented all the current day and future churches
- These churches were located in seven of the largest cities in the Roman Empire
- Most likely were located on a mail route, connected by the Roman roads
- Ephesus was located nearest to the Island of Patmos where John had the vision.
- All 7 are in Asia Minor or Turkey



Each letter has the following things in common:

- Address "To the angel in the church of...."
- Attribute "These are the words of him who..." The title of Jesus is carefully chosen for each church because it is something they have forgotten or need to consider.
- Assertion "I know your deeds...." NOTE: this switches to 3<sup>rd</sup> person. Becomes more intimate information. It asserts a knowledge of the people to who the speaker is speaking.

- State of the church A description of the state of the church by way of praise, promise or warning.
- Promise Of the Lord's coming
- Assurance "To him who overcomes I will..."
- Appeal "Let him who has an ear hear what the Spirit says..."

## LETTER TO THE CHURCH AT SARDIS

### Sardis-The Church of Complacency or The Dead Church

Sardis- the term means "escaping" It was located 33 miles from Thyatira, but located on a high plateau (1500 ft above the valley). Because of this, it was relatively easy to maintain security with the natural fortress and stronghold. The small neck of the land to the south was the only entry point and it was a steep, tedious and winding climb. The other sides of the city were smooth rock walls that were almost perpendicular. However, over the course of history there were several times, invading armies were able to scale the wall at a single point, where it was not guarded. It was the capital of Lydia and was almost impregnable. It was the first Metropolis of Asia and of Lydia and of Hellenism (GREEK). In 549 BC the Persians invaded the city by scaling one of the walls, one by one in the night. (A Lydian soldier dropped his helmet) This was unexpected and unguarded. This scenario happened again more than 3 ½ centuries later when Antiochus the Great conquered Sardis. They had not learned from history. Then in A.D. 17 it suffered great damage due to an earthquake. Tiberius of Rome helped them rebuild. At the time of John's writing, much of the splendor of Sardis was a thing of the past.

There is evidence that a good number of Jews lived in Sardis. There is also evidence that it was the home for the imperial cult and Caesar worship. But the dominant religion had to do with worshipping the force of nature. The patron deity of the city was Cybele, or also known as Artemis. YOUNG GIRLS WERE FORCED TO BE PROSTITUTES FOR 2 YEARS. Pagan religions attributed healing power to their deities but a special focus in Sardis was on their ability to restore "life from the dead". \*ILLUS. NEW AGE ENGLISH GIRL - fasting and died in Guatemala

- Address ***"To the angel of the church of Sardis write..."***
- Attribute-(Title) ***"These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars"***
  - The seven Spirits of God symbolizes the Spirit's omniscience.
  - Holding the seven stars shows His authority and control of the seven churches
  - The general nature of this description is designed to create alarm and lead to repentance. It introduces a message of rebuke. The Lord of the church comes armed

with all the powers of the Spirit, searching the depths of hypocrisy and judging the worthless works not done in faith.

- It also gives reference to the adequacy of the life-giving Spirit to resolve the problem of the deadness of the Sardian church
- The number 7 symbolizes the abundance and fullness of God's light

**Zech. 4:2,10** *And he said to me, "What do you see?" So I said, "I am looking, and there is a lampstand of solid gold with a bowl on top of it, and on the stand seven lamps with seven pipes to the seven lamps...For who has despised the day of small things? For these seven rejoice to see The plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel. They are the eyes of the LORD, Which scan to and fro throughout the whole earth. **NOTHING HIDDEN FROM GOD'S SIGHT***

**Isaiah. 11:2** *The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.*

- Assertion 3:1 **"I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.**
  - Name: rank, authority, fame, reputation or character. In Hebrew "name" denoted inner reality or self-disclosure but in Greek it spoke of an external or superficial estimate.
  - Dead: here "Nekros" refers to spiritual death, an inward condition.
  - They had grown careless and indifferent of spiritual things and gradually declined over the years, much like the waning splendor of the city.
  - There was no mention of persecution or pressure. Or battles with the false teachers. The church appears to have been well thought of by many. They had made peace with the surrounding society and fit in comfortably with their culture. \*ILLUS. PASTOR CRAIG
- State of the church and warning VS 2-3 **"Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you."**
  - They were not at the point of no return. They had sunk into a deep sleep and needed to awaken.
  - The divine prescription for them was to be watchful. "Wake up and keep on watching." Their complacency had lured them into blending in w/ the world.
  - Their history served as reminders to be vigilant. The two overthrows of their city could have been easily diverted if someone had been watching.

- Perfect here implies complete. It deals more with quality than quantity. THEY ARE BEING TOLD THEY HAVE NOT COMPLETED WHAT GOD HAD FOR THEM. THEIR DESTINY WAS NOT FULFILLED.
- The basis for renewal is to bear constantly in mind the manner in which they had received and heard the gospel. Hold fast (and keep on holding). GALATIANS 3:1 ○ **foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, .....Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith?.....** BY FAITH SO HOLD FAST AND KEEP ON HOLDING
- Repent- a quick and decisive change of thought or behavior. Turning away from their spiritual lethargy.
- Therefore - a spiritual warning follows the cure and is somewhat surprising. Did Jesus not anticipate their acceptance of His terms for restoration?
- Similar references to Christ coming as a thief Matt 24:43, Luke 12:39; I Thess. 5:2; 2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 16:15. The day of the Lord comes on those who are unprepared as a thief.
- Thief in the Night in 1 Thessalonians 5 vs 4...**but you brethren are not in the darkness.....vs 6 let us WATCH AND BE SOBER.**
- Assurance
  - VS 4 (**But or Yet**) **You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy**
  - Names or persons
  - Had not soiled their garments. "smear, befoul or pollute"
  - In the custom of the pagan worship in the surrounding area, soiled clothes disqualified the worshipper and dishonored the god he tried to worship.
  - Connecting verses: Jude 23 soiling of the garment is traced to flesh; Rev. 19:8 unsoiled robes washed white in the blood of the Lamb; Ps.132:16; Isa. 61:10 speak of the garments of salvation; Job 29:14; Ps.132:9; Isa. 61:10 speak of the robes of righteousness.
  - Keeping oneself from indulging in the pagan impurities. Thus could be referring to the mingling of Christian and pagan practices
  - Keeping pure and not falling into sin
  - The promise to the remnant - they will walk with me in white. Speaks of holiness and purity.
  - The anticipation of wearing such apparel, and the personal companionship of Christ gave incentive to the remnant to remain faithful.
- Promise

V. 5 ***“He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.*”**

- Overcomers - the faithful remnant
- White - purity, victory, light, sanctity, righteousness, glory
- In 2 Cor. 5:1,4 speaks of the earthly body as a garment to be taken off
- It was a recognition of their ministry and office as priests to God.
- Other references to the Book of Life or the registry of heaven: Luke 10:20; Phil. 4:3; Heb. 12:23; Rev. 13:8; 17:8).

- Blotting name out has to do with judgement Rev 20:12

*And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.*

- Psalm 69:28 speaks of the wicked being in the book of the living... *“Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, And not be written with the righteous.”*
- I will confess his name before My Father - Matt 10:32; Mk 8:38; Luke 9:26
- The overcomer will be vindicated in the judgement. His name will not be removed from the roll of the kingdom.

- Appeal V 6 ***“He who has an ear hear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches”***

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