



## Rev 3.1-6 – SARDIS, THE ZOMBIE CHURCH



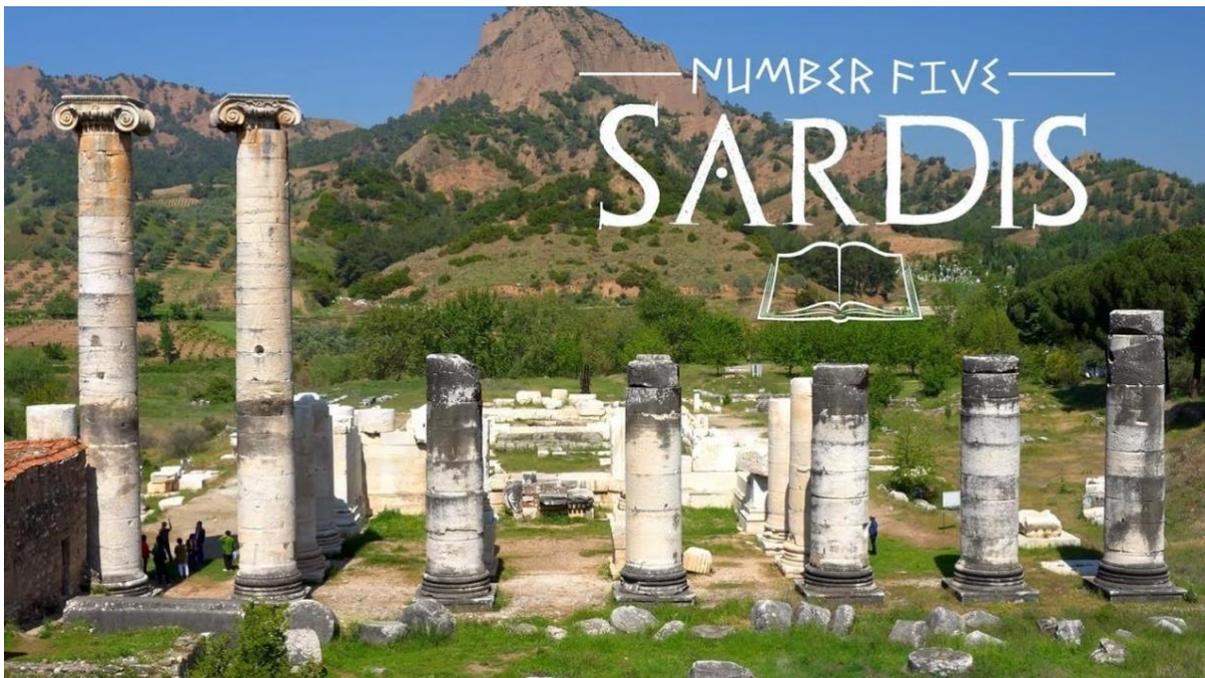
### Three kinds of churches in any community:

1. The churches that God knows are alive and vibrant.
  - a. The churches that are truly alive in Christ and preach the Gospel with challenge and promise.
2. The churches that think they are alive simply because of attendance and wealth.
3. The churches that died years ago and go through the production of church because they don't want revival, and they don't want to change.

- **Dr. Vance Havner** has frequently reminded us that spiritual ministries often go through four stages:
  1. a man,
  2. a movement,
  3. a machine,
  4. and then a monument. <sup>1</sup>

## Sardis:

- **Dwight Pentecost:** Sardis means: **“those escaping”**. <sup>2</sup>
  - **Ramsay:** (*op. cit.*, p. 354) “the city of Death,” city of softness and luxury, of apathy and immorality, “a contrast of past splendour and present un-resting decline”. <sup>3</sup>
- The home of King Croesus and of Aesop. <sup>4</sup>
  - King Croesus – the King with the “Midas touch”
  - Aesop – of Aesop’s Fables



Excavations . . . unearthed . . . an exceptionally large (160 by 300 feet) temple dedicated to Artemis. Its seventy-eight Ionic columns (of which two are still standing) are each fifty-eight feet in height. . . . It was dedicated to a local Asiatic goddess usually referred to as Cybele, who was identified with the

<sup>1</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 576.

<sup>2</sup> J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958), 152

<sup>3</sup> A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933), Re 3:1.

<sup>4</sup> Henry M. Morris, *The Revelation Record: A Scientific and Devotional Commentary on the Prophetic Book of the End Times* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 1983), 67.

Greek Artemis. **This patron deity was believed to possess the special power of restoring the dead to life.** <sup>5</sup>

- Sardis, the once proud capital of Lydia, and the residence of its opulent monarchs is now reduced to a wretched Turkish village called Sart, the habitation of herdsmen, buffaloes, and oxen, situated at the foot of mount Tmolus, on the banks of the Pactolus, between 30 and 40 miles east from Smyrna. The ruins of Sardis are peculiarly grand, and lift up their heads, as if to assert their ancient glory; but it now contains not a single Christian family. <sup>6</sup>
- **Pliny says that the art of dyeing wool was invented there**, and it was the entrepôt of the dyed woollen manufactures, carpets, etc., the raw material for which was furnished by the flocks of Phrygia. <sup>7</sup>

**1** “And to the angel of the church in Sardis write,  
‘These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars:  
“I know your works,  
that you have **a name** that you are alive,  
but you are dead.

- Jesus is recognized by His seven Spirits.
- It's a part of who He is:  
**Revelation 5:6** And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, **having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth.**
- A “name” in contrast with reality
  - A “name”, or a reputation for being alive – but Jesus saw the church as **DEAD!**  
**2 Timothy 3:5** having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!  
**James 2:17** Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.
- Your name refers to a life – you have a reputation of life

<sup>5</sup> Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977), 109.

<sup>6</sup> Jerome Smith, *The New Treasury of Scripture Knowledge* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1992),

<sup>7</sup> Marvin Richardson Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, vol. 2 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1887), 461.

- **BUT GOD** – He knows different!

- **Not a heresy issue**

- No false teachers, no false doctrines
- No unruly Jezebels attempting to take over
- Dying a respectable death
- She's orthodox in all she does – **but it's a dead orthodoxy!**

**2 Corinthians 3:5–6**

**5** Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God,

**6** who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

- **Nothing happens because you have all your ducks in a row!**

- Problem if you have all the money for ministry.
- Problem if you have all the staff you could use.
- Problem if you have no reason to be stretched by faith.
  - Our church's finances often bring our Elders to our knees.

**E.M. Bounds:** “We are constantly on a stretch, if not on a strain, to devise new methods, new plans, new organizations to advance the Church and secure enlargement and efficiency for the gospel. This trend of the day has a tendency to lose sight of the man or sink the man in the plan or organization. God's plan is to make much of the man, far more of him than of anything else.

**Men are God's method.**

**The Church is looking for better methods;**

**God is looking for better men.**

What the Church needs today is not more machinery or better, not new organizations or more and novel methods, but men whom the Holy Ghost can use — men of prayer, men mighty in prayer.

The Holy Ghost does not flow through methods, but through men.

He does not come on machinery, but on men.  
He does not anoint plans, but men — men of prayer.”

**2** Be watchful,  
and **strengthen the things which remain**, that are ready to die,  
for I have not found your works perfect before God.

God doesn't say:

- Be cool
- Dress hip
- Talk street language
- Get a street cred
- Get those cool panoramic screens
- Build things with pallets – (so cool now)

**“Be watchful”**

- **Strengthen the things which remain:**
  - Orthodoxy – make it your orthopraxy
    - “First love” of Jesus power
    - WORD AND SPIRIT –
      - Word alone – you dry up
      - Spirit alone – you blow up
      - Word and Spirit – you grow up

**Only the Holy Spirit can give life to a dead man; to a dead church!**

***Ephesians 2:1–10***

**1** And you He made alive, **who were dead in trespasses and sins,**  
**2** in which you once walked according to the course of this world,  
according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works  
in the sons of disobedience,  
**3** among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our  
flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature  
children of wrath, just as the others.  
**4 But God,** who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He  
loved us,  
**5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with  
Christ (by grace you have been saved),**  
**6** and raised us up together,  
and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

7 that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His 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 of works, lest anyone should boast.**

10 **For we are His workmanship,** created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

### **John 3:3–5**

3 Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, **unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.**”

4 Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?”

5 Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you,

**unless one is born of water and the Spirit,**

he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

3 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.

- It seems each time the words **“thief in the night”** is used in the N.T. – it is always used to refer to the return of Christ – His second coming.

### **Matthew 24:43–44 (Luke 12:39–40)**

43 But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour **the thief would come**, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into.

44 Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

### **1 Thessalonians 5:2–4**

2 For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.

3 For when they say, “Peace and safety!” then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.

4 But you, brethren, are not in darkness,

so that this Day should **overtake you as a thief.**

## **2 Peter 3:10–12**

**10** But the day of the Lord will come **as a thief in the night**, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.

**11** Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, **what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,**

**12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God,** because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?

**4** 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.

**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.

### **A few names:**

- Even in Sardis – imagine that!

### **Three promises:**

1. You shall walk with me in white garments
2. I will not blot out your name from **the Book of Life**
  - a. While this passage may imply that a name could be erased from the book of life, **actually it only gives a positive affirmation that their names will not be erased** (cf. Walvoord, *Revelation*. pp. 82, 338).<sup>8</sup>
3. I will confess your name before My Father, and before His angels.

### **Book of Life**

- Names written before time began – all who would bear His image
  - All children conceived are written in the Book of Life
- SIN – initial sin blots our names out

<sup>8</sup> John F. Walvoord, "Revelation," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 938–939.

o Age of accountability?

- When is a child first held accountable by God?
- When does our first sin occur?

**James 4:17** Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.

**1 John 1:8-9**

**8** If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

**9** If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

- Logically, a name cannot be blotted out of the Book of Life unless it has been written in the Book of Life. **The Book of Life is not merely the book of the living, but the book of the redeemed.** God has kept such a book from the beginning, witness the expression “my book” (Ex 32:33), a book therefore not to be identified as the census list of the nation of Israel! A person’s name is blotted out because of sin (Ex 32:33), **but here it is promised that those who are overcomers will not be blotted out of the Book of Life.** <sup>9</sup>

**Daniel 12:1**

**1** “At that time Michael shall stand up,  
The great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people;  
And there shall be a time of trouble,  
Such as never was since there was a nation,  
Even to that time.  
And at that time your people shall be delivered,  
**Every one who is found written in the book.**

**Revelation 13:8–9**

**8** All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in **the Book of Life** of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.  
**9** If anyone has an ear, let him hear.

**Revelation 17:8** The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will

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<sup>9</sup> Jerome H. Smith, *The New Treasury of Scripture Knowledge: The Most Complete Listing of Cross References Available Anywhere—Every Verse, Every Theme, Every Important Word* (Nashville TN: Thomas Nelson, 1992), 1508.

marvel, whose names are not written in **the Book of Life** from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

**Revelation 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.

**Revelation 20:15** And anyone not found written in **the Book of Life** was cast into the lake of fire.

**Revelation 21:27** But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in **the Lamb's Book of Life**.

### **Revelation 22:18–19**

**18** For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book;

**19** and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, **God shall take away his part from the Book of Life**, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

**6** "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." ' "

- Even in such a church as Sardis, where both belief and practice have deteriorated to mere form and only a handful of its professing members really possess eternal life through trust in the name of Christ, the Spirit still calls men to repentance and revival. <sup>10</sup>

**John 5:24** "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.

<sup>10</sup> Henry M. Morris, *The Revelation Record: A Scientific and Devotional Commentary on the Prophetic Book of the End Times* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 1983), 69–70.