

What is the significance of Sardis in the Bible?

<https://www.gotquestions.org/Sardis-in-the-Bible.html>

Sardis is one of the seven churches of Asia mentioned in the book of Revelation. Jesus told the apostle John, “Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea” (Revelation 1:11). Jesus also gave John specific messages for each of the churches.

Sardis, in west-central Asia Minor, was the capital of the ancient kingdom of Lydia and a wealthy and important commercial trading center. As a pagan city, Sardis was home to the well-known temple of Artemis, which still exists today in ruins. The church at Sardis was surrounded by paganism and idolatry but failed to stand out amidst the darkness. Although they appeared spiritual on the outside, Jesus knew their hearts. He rebuked them by stating, “I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead” (Revelation 3:1). Falling prey to a similar sin as the Pharisees, they were like whitewashed tombs: clean and white on the outside, but dead on the inside (Matthew 23:27-28).

Jesus offered a warning to the church at Sardis, reminding them of His judgment if they failed to “wake up” spiritually: “I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have found your deeds unfinished in the sight of my God. Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; hold it fast, and repent” (Revelation 3:1-3). There was more work to do, and He would bring judgment swiftly upon the church of Sardis if they remained in their spiritual deadness. Using similar wording and imagery to descriptions of His second coming, Jesus said He would come “like a thief” at an unknown time to bring judgment upon Sardis unexpectedly. In prior history, the city of Sardis had been

conquered by the Persians and the Romans, events that provided illustrations of Jesus' sudden judgment on the church. Sardis's congregation needed to heed Jesus' command to remember, hold fast, and repent (Revelation 3:3).

Jesus commended the few in Sardis "who have not soiled their clothes" (Revelation 3:4). He promised a blessing on the undefiled: "They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy" (Revelation 3:4). Others could do the same: "The one who is victorious will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out the name of that person from the book of life, but will acknowledge that name before my Father and his angels" (Revelation 3:4). This verse does not mean that people can lose their salvation—the promise is that the names of those who trust in Christ can never be erased from the book of life (see also John 10:28). Although the church of Sardis received no communal commendation from the Lord, they still had a hope and a promise. Jesus urged them to wake up from their deadness, promising He would be faithful.

The message of Him "who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars" was applicable to the church of Sardis and is still relevant today (Revelation 3:1). Many churches in the present time could be viewed as "spiritual" for their multiple programs, large crowds, and well-structured services. But it's possible for a church to have the appearance of life while in reality being spiritually dead. Modern churches may need to take a careful spiritual inventory and "strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die" (Revelation 3:2, NKJV). Those who are experiencing spiritual death and unfruitfulness should listen to Christ's words to the church of Sardis and complete their duty before God.