

# Chapter 1

## Sardis: Complacency (3:1–6)

### 1.1 Address opening the letter (3:1a)

#### Revelation 3:1a

And to the angel of the church in Sardis write. . .

1. **Sardis**: Located at an elevated plateau and the terrain made it a militarily strong city. It was the capital of the region of Lydia. They had a Jewish synagogue and Josephus wrote that the Jews were wealthy. The patron god is Artemis whom they believed could restore life and they also worshipped the emperor.
2. Do not know how the church was formed, but it grew careless and indifferent to spiritual things and gradually declined. Nothing is mentioned about opposition from Jews, pagans, etc.

See Photos in ??

## 1.2 Attributes of the speaker (3:1b)

### Revelation 3:1b

... These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars ...

1. **Seven Spirits of God**: As already noted in 1:4, it refers to the Holy Spirit

**Zec 4:2-10**. And he said to me, "What do you see?" So I said, "I am looking, and there is a lamp stand of solid gold with a bowl on top of it, and on the stand seven lamps with seven pipes to the

seven lamps. . . . 6 So he answered and said to me: "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' Says the LORD of hosts

Rev 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

Coincidentally, these verses also confirms Holy Spirit proceeds from Christ also and symbolizes omniscience of the Holy Spirit.

John 15:26. But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me

Rom 8:9. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His

2. **Holds seven stars:** similar to 1:16 and 2:1 it designates the Lord's authority and control, extends to the whole church. It is a stern warning similar to the church at Ephesus.

## 1.3 Knowledge about the people of the Church (3:1c)

### Revelation 3:1c

... I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead

1. **I know your works:** Lord knows clearly all the areas of life of every individual, and in particular the deeds of the church.
2. **you have a name (*Onoma*):** In Hebrew thought name denoted inner reality but in Greek it spoke of an external such as rank, authority, fame, reputation, or character. Individual members of the church had good reputation. It generally refers to nominal (name sake) Christian.
3. **alive (*zes*):** indicate spiritual life contrasting *bios* referring to physical life.
4. **yet you are dead (*nekros*):** dead refers to spiritual death. The church has reached a stage where it is not able to make any new converts. They are active externally, giving an impression of being alive. They made peace with the surrounding society and fit in comfortably with their culture Sardis was sunk into deep sleep and near death

Mat 8:22. But Jesus said to him, "Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead."

2 Tim 3:5. having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!

Jas 2:17. Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead

## 1.4 State of the Church (3:2-3a,4)

### Revelation 3:2

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

1. **Be watchful:** Prove yourself to be watchful, be alert against enemy. City fall to Persians in BC 549 and to Antiochus the Great in BC 195 which could have been avoided even with minimal watch (City has long cliff, difficult to come, so left unguarded, but enemy attacked).
2. **Things which remain:** The rest of the people who are not spiritually dead must work together to rebuild the church.
3. **That are ready to die:** those believers if not acted then church will fully die. A glimmer of hope.

4. **Perfect:** the quantify and more importantly the quality of work is lacking, work needs to be motivated by love and faith will only have value before God.
5. **Before my God:** Gods evaluation is quite different from mans

1 Sam 16:7. But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look at his [Jesse's son Eliab] appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."

### Revelation 3:3a

**Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. . .**

1. **Therefore:** gracious call to take advantage of the solution the believers problem of stagnancy.
2. **Remember (*mnemouneue*):** command to keep the rich spiritual heritage of the past as motivating force in their restoration (Gal 5:7, Col 2:6, Heb 3:14, 10:32), i.e. remember how they have received the gospel.
3. **Hold fast (*tereĩ*):** keep on keeping the remaining things, give attention to strengthening of the remnant.

4. **Repent (*metanoeson*)**: a call for a quick and decisive change of thought and behavior. Confess and turn away from their spiritual lethargy. Note I repent (*metanoeo*) means a regret over wrongdoings in the past which results in a change of lifestyle for the better; but, I regret (*metamelomai*) refers to a remorseful desire to undo things already done but has no implication of a change of heart.

### Revelation 3:4

**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.**

1. **Few names... not defiled their garments**: A minority in the church had not soiled/polluted their garments. Pagan thinks soiled cloths disqualifies the worship and dishonors god he tried to worship. It refers to those who have not soiled the purity of their Christian lives by falling into sin. Any sin which Christians may fall can contaminate.

Rev 7:14. ...he [angle] said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb

Rev 1:5. and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood

2. **Walk with Me in white:** Christ will replace their humanly preserved clean garments with those that are white by divine standards. Note Christ also has such garments

Mat 17:2. and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light

Mark 9:3. His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them

Luke 9:29. As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became white and glistening

unfallen angels

Mat 28:3. His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow

Mark 16:5. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed

Act 1:10. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel

Rev 15:6. And out of the temple came the seven angels having the seven plagues, clothed in pure bright linen, and having their chests girded with golden bands

Rev 19:8, 14. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses

Indicates personal companionship of Christ is a great motivation to live a life different from the vast majority.

3. **For the are worthy:** They are not inherently worthy, but relative worthiness, since only the Lord is worthy

Rev 5:2. Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?" ... 4 So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it ... 10 And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth."

Lk 21:36. Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."

Eph 4:1. And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth."

Phil 1:27. I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called

## 1.5 Promise of the Lords return (3:3b)

### Revelation 3:3b

... 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.

1. **Therefore:** it seems like a threat than a promise if the church do not repent, although there is only a slight hope.
2. **You watch:** waiting for His coming is a sign of spiritual life.
3. **Come as a thief:** NT teaches clearly of His unexpected coming:

Mat 24:42. Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming

Luke 12:40. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect

1 Thes 5:2. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night

2 Pet 3:10. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night . . .

Rev 16:15. Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame

Note also that His coming is not conditioned on human response, for his coming is sovereignly determined by the Father. Nevertheless, from the perspective of Israel, several other developments happens. For instance, the repentance of the Nation of Israel

Rom 11:25-26. For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. 26 And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob

4. **You will no know:** church has absolutely not way of knowing when He is coming, so don't be smarter than God by trying to find out or believe those who claim. Sardis understand this better for they were completely surprised by the enemies (BC 549 Cyrcus, BC 195 Antiochus the Great).

## 1.6 Command to hear and obey (3:6)

### Revelation 3:6

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

1. **He who has ear let him hear:** an individual call of Jesus. Note Jesus is the only one in the Scripture to use this invitation and reserves it for special occasions.

Mat 11:15. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!

Mat 13:9. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

Mat 13:43. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!

Mark 9:7. And a cloud came and overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the cloud, saying,  
"This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!"

2. **Spirit says:** Christ is the speaker. Holy Spirit is the one inspires the spirit of the apostle. The Apostle is the mouth piece of Christ and his words goes to the churches.

## 1.7 Promise to the overcomer (3:5)

### Revelation 3:5

**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.**

1. **Overcomer:** Overcomer is same as not failing like the majority of the Sardis church.
2. **White garments:** white is symbolic of purity or glory or victory

Rev 3:18. I counsel you to buy from Me ... white garments ...

Rev 6:11. Then a white robe was given to each of them ...

Rev 7:9. After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude ... clothed with white robes ...

Rev 7:13-14. Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?" 14 And I said to him, "Sir, you know." So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb

It refers to eternal state of purity alluding to Joshua the high priest was given

Zec 3:4-10. Then He answered ... "Take away the filthy garments from him." And to him He said, "See, I have removed your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you with rich robes"

There is a linkage to priestly function indicating the acceptability before God and the divine recognition of their office and ministry as priests of God.

Exo 28:39-42. "You shall skillfully weave the tunic of fine linen thread ... 41 So you shall put them on Aaron your brother and on his sons with him. You shall anoint them, consecrate them, and sanctify them, that they may minister to Me as priests

Ezek 44:17. And it shall be, whenever they enter the gates of the inner court, that they shall put on linen garments; no wool shall come upon them while they minister within the gates of the inner court or within the house

### 3. Not blot out his name from the Book of Life:

(a) OT usage is connected with judgment against the enemies of God

Exo 32:32. Yet now, if You will forgive their sin—but if not, I pray, blot me [Moses] out of Your book which You have written

Duet 9:14. Let Me alone, that I may destroy them and blot out their name from under heaven; and I will make of you a nation mightier and greater than they.'

Duet 25:19. . . . in the land which the Lord your God is giving you to possess as an inheritance, that you will blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven . . .

Psa 69:28. Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, And not be written with the righteous

Opposite of it refers to a blessing

Isa 4:3. And it shall come to pass that he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy—everyone who is recorded among the living in Jerusalem

Dan 12:1. ... at that time your people shall be delivered, Every one who is found written in the book

Mal 3:16. ... So a book of remembrance was written before Him For those who fear the Lord And who meditate on His name

(b) NT also uses it in the context of blessing

Luke 10:20. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven

Phil 4:3. the rest of my [Pauls] fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life

Rev 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

(c) NT also uses in the context of judgement

Rev 13:8. All ... whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world

Rev 17:8. ... those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast ...

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. . .

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

- (d) In some sense Christ died for the whole world and the name of everyone is written in the book of life, but the benefit is potential only. It becomes actual only when one accepts/believes Him before his death.

John 1:29. . . . John . . . said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

John 3:16. For God so loved the world . . .

John 4:42. . . . we [Samaritans] know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world"

1 John 2:2. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world

1 John 4:14. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world

4. **Confess his name before Father:** Jesus will acknowledge us before Father the Judge. Sardis is ashamed of the name of Christ now, but the value of that name will be known later.

Mat 10:32. "Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven

Luke 12:8-9. “Also I say to you, whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God. 9 But he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God

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