



**SARDIS: The Dead Church    Rev. 3:1-6    July 27, 2025**

### **Rev. 3:1-6 (NAS)**

"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.<sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

### **Video: Sardis**

#### **A. PICTURE: MAP of TURKEY**

Welcome to the ancient ruins of Sardis, located about 50 miles E from the port city of Izmir (Smyrna).

#### **PICTURE: Artist depiction**

Sardis is a very popular archeological site and one of the ancient world's greatest cities.

And as we have seen in our virtual tour today, you can't miss

- its massive Temple of Artemis (Diana) (4<sup>th</sup> largest ionic temple in the world),
- its stunning bath-gymnasium complex,
- the largest known synagogue in the ancient world, and
- its impenetrable acropolis rising some 1,500 feet above the plain with its 36' tall walls, 52' thick, stretching some 4 football-fields-long (1252').

- B. In Sardis, a church was birthed, that was given the amazing opportunity to change their world with the gospel of Jesus.

How many of you like football?

We are just 4 Fridays away from the start of HS football.

- C. Well, God gave the church at Sardis the gospel football, and told them to go score touchdowns for Jesus.

Can anyone guess how they did? THEY FUMBLED THE BALL!

They started well, but they didn't end well.  
They fumbled the ball and sadly, they lost the game.

- D. But what is most important to know is not that they fumbled. But HOW they fumbled.

Because God has given us an amazing opportunity here at Pearl.

God has given us His gospel football, and He has called us to go and score touchdowns for Jesus.

And God doesn't want you and me to fumble the ball.  
And He certainly doesn't want us to lose the game.

- E. And that's why Jesus wrote this letter to the church at Sardis. And that's why Jesus wrote this letter to you and me.

Jesus has a word that needs to be heard.  
God wants to use you to score touchdowns for Jesus, but you have to make sure you don't fumble the ball.

- F. Jesus gives you 3 exercises you must do to never fumble the ball.

## **1. God wants you to WAKE UP**

"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 (reputation) that you are alive, but you are dead.<sup>2</sup> Wake up,

- A. Now let me give you some history about Sardis, so you can understand why Jesus told the church at Sardis to wake up.

Sardis was the capital of the Lydian Empire which ruled from 1200BC to 547BC (653 years)

- B. And guess what Sardis was most known for? GOLD  
The Pactolus river that ran through Sardis was rich in gold. In fact, legend said that King Midas, who was king of Phrygia, was granted the wish by the god, Dionysus, to turn everything he touched into gold, but when he realized that included all his food & drink (and it was a curse), King Midas washed away his golden touch in the Pactolus river, making Sardis super-rich in gold.

And thus, they got a name for themselves. They got a reputation of being "golden."

- C. And their kings were said to be super rich in gold.

**PICTURE: GOLD COINS**

And in fact, one of their kings (Gyges) minted the first gold (electrum) coins and the next King (Croesus) put them in circulation and used them for purchasing goods and supplies.

So, Sardis is the birthplace of coins and the coinage system used in our world today.

- D. **PICTURE: KING CROESUS** - And because of King Croesus was so rich, he knew he was a huge target. So, he fortified the acropolis on Mount Tmolus with its massive walls, made it his palace, and said his kingdom was unconquerable.

But in 547BC, Cyrus the Great of Persia, did the unthinkable – conquered Sardis and put a nail in the coffin to the Lydian Empire.

- E. You see, they thought they were invincible. They thought no one would ever take them. They thought they were SOMETHING, and would never be reduced to NOTHING.

And Jesus tells the church at Sardis, you also have a reputation. You think you're something, when the truth is you're nothing.

In fact, Jesus said, "You think you are alive, but you're dead."

- F. That has to be some of the saddest words in all the Bible; spoken by the Lord Jesus.  
**"You have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead."**

How would you like Jesus to say that about your church?  
How would you like Jesus to say that about you?

- G. I don't want to have the reputation of being alive, but dead.

What does that mean?

- It means you say you're a Christian, but you don't live like one.
- It means you say you believe in Jesus, but you don't really live for Jesus.
- It means you say Jesus rules over this world, but He's not ruling over your life.

Here's what it really means:

- **You are all about giving Jesus lip-service, but you don't give Jesus life-service.**

Jesus said about the Pharisees (who thought they were alive),

**Mt. 15:8-9**

**These people honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me.**

H. And Jesus says, you think you're alive, but you're spiritually dead.

- You tell people you believe the Bible, but you're not learning the Bible. You don't love the Bible. You're not living the Bible.
- You talk about prayer, but you don't talk with God in prayer (unless there's an emergency)
- You show up at church, but you don't give God all the worship He deserves at church.
- You give your tithes to God, but you won't give your life to God.

And here's a big one:

- You like Jesus, but there is no proof that you are becoming like Jesus.

I. You're just doing the church thing.

And in your mind, you think you're something with God.

But guess what Jesus says about you?

You're not something. You're nothing, because there's nothing in you that really, really wants what Jesus has for you.

And what Jesus has for you, is His life that He wants to live in you and through you.

And since Jesus' life is really not IN you, you're not ALIVE. YOU'RE DEAD!

J. And that's why Jesus then says, "WAKE UP!"

- Wake up - if you say you are Christian, you need to live like one.
- Wake up - if you say you believe in Jesus, you must live for Jesus.
- Wake up - if you say you believe Jesus rules over this world, He must rule over your life.
- Wake up to loving, learning, and living by the Bible.
- Wake up to praying every day, all day to Jesus.
- Wake up to not just showing up at church, but giving God the worship He deserves at church.
- Wake up to not just giving God your tithes and offerings, but giving God your life.

K. Because if you don't wake up, you're going to fumble the ball.

And you're not going to score touchdowns for Jesus.

God wants you to wake up.

## 2. God wants you to SHAPE UP

<sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> 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.

- A. Note Jesus says, “strengthen the things that remain...remember what you have received and heard; and keep it, and repent.”

I have a clue what was going in the church of Sardis. And my clue comes from the Jewish synagogue that was constructed in Sardis – the largest synagogue in the ancient world.

- B. Guess where it was built.

**PICTURE: SYNAGOGUE & GYM**

Right beside the gymnasium-bath complex.  
(bathing in the nude)

And inside the synagogue you will find Jewish, Christian, Roman, and pagan symbols.

(You will see a menorah with a cross in the center)  
(On the table/altar where they read the Torah scrolls, eagle engraved on the legs)  
(Lions representing Artemis)

What were these Jews thinking?

- C. I think they were thinking the same thing the church at Sardis was thinking.

And here's what I think the church folk were thinking:

All roads lead to God.

It doesn't matter what road you are on (Jewish road, Roman Road, Muslim Road, Hindu Road, Buddhist Road, the Christian Road, Pagan Road). All roads lead to God.

**Jesus is not THE way to God. Jesus is just A way to God.**

- D. They so desired to be accepted by the world, they wouldn't take a strong stand for Jesus IN the world.

Listen, **Jesus took a strong stand for you and me.**

- He stood strong when He said,  
Jn. 14:6  
“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.
- He stood strong when He who knew no sin, became sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus (2 Cor. 5:21)

- He stood strong when He paid your in debt in full with His blood. He paid a debt that He did not owe, because you owe a debt you cannot pay.
- He stood strong when He came back from the dead and declared to His disciples,  
Mt. 28:18-20  
“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. <sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

E. Jesus took a strong stand for you and me. And we must take a strong stand for Him.

And the way we take a strong stand for Him is that we live like Jesus and for Jesus. You are in this world, but you are not of this world.

The Sardis Christians had become worldly.

They walked like, talked like, thought like the world, more than Jesus.

ILL. Christian camp – Play secular song

Belt out that song, but can't belt out the Christian song.

F. There's no such thing as a worldly Christian.

(That's an oxymoron)

If you are a Christian, you live in this world, but you don't want live like this world.

You want to be more like Jesus and less like this world.

This world has nothing for you.

Jesus has everything for you.

G. And that's why Jesus said,

Rev. 3:2-3

strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God. <sup>3</sup> So remember what you have received and heard; and keep *it*, and repent

H. And then Jesus adds:

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.

Ok, one more history lesson about Sardis.

**PICTURE: MOUNT TMOLUS**

King Croesus fortified the acropolis with its massive walls, made it his palace, and said his kingdom was unconquerable.

547 BC - King Cyrus surrounds Mount Tmolus.

He built ramparts towards the top, but because of the sheer cliffs and its 36' tall walls (52' thick), there was no way to break through and overthrow King Croesus.

Croesus stationed guards along the wall to keep a look out. And one night while some Persians spies were watching below, a soldier of Sardis fell asleep on the wall and his helmet went over the wall.

To retrieve his helmet, the soldier walk down a secret passageway to a secret door in the wall; opened the door and got his helmet.

And the Persian spies discovered the way in.  
And that's how the Persians took Sardis.

All because a soldier fell asleep.

- I. And that's why Jesus says,

Rev. 3:3

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.

Jesus is not talking about the rapture.

He's talking about judgment upon those who don't wake up.

He's talking about if you keep chasing after this world, you're going to become like this world.

And sadly, I know many who have fumbled the ball and turned away from Jesus as THE way, THE truth, and THE life, and they have nothing more to do with Jesus, but they have much to do with the world.

They got what they were chasing after.

The world broke through their wall and got them.

God wants you to shape up.

Get back to the truth about Jesus.

Get back to the truths of the Word of God.

Get back to:

Scripture alone

Christ alone

Faith alone

Grace alone

And Glory to God alone.

And you will not fumble the football.

### 3. God wants you to LOOK UP

<sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

- A. In that day, the people wore togas. And when there was a victory or a grand celebration, everyone wore white.

Those who don't give in to this world and those who stand up and stand out for Jesus, will one day participate in the victory celebration in Heaven; wearing garments of white. You are stained by the ways of this world.

And Jesus says your name, "I will not erase from the book of life."

- B. That does not imply that Jesus erases people's names from the book of life (meaning, they can lose their salvation).

Jesus is actually giving you assurance, saying that once your name is written in His book of life, it's in there forever. And no one, not even Jesus will ever erase it.

- C. And here's the best part:  
Jesus will confess your name to His Father and the angels. Jesus will tell God and the angels you belong with Him.

- D. Jesus wants you to look up, because one day you are going to leave this world, and if you have trusted Jesus as your Savior and Lord, and you will enter Heaven and Jesus will tell God and the angels, "He's/She's with me."

Can you hear Jesus saying that about you?

- E. If you can't, you won't be standing with Jesus. You will be standing BEFORE Jesus.

And sadly, you will hear Him say, "Depart from Me for I never knew you."

...which, BTW, are truly the saddest words in all the Bible.

Conclusion:

God wants you to Wake Up  
Shape Up  
Look Up

And if you make that your daily habit, you will never fumble the ball, and you will score many touchdowns for Jesus.