

Remnant Life Church

April 12, 2026

## **The Seven Churches of Revelation:**

### **Sardis**

Revelation 3:1-6

The apostle John is on an island

- Now most of the time when we hear the word island, we think vacation although that may not always be the case
- It would depend on why you were on that island
  - I just received word from my brother Douglas that his son, Andrew, a Staff Sargeant in the Army, has received his next assignment
    - He will be a Jungle school instructor
    - In Hawaii
    - Now many think of that island as a bucket-list destination
    - To him it will be about teaching survival skills to other soldiers
- John's reason for being on the island of Patmos is not about rest and relaxation
  - He has been banished there by the Roman Emperor Domitian
  - He remained there for about a year and half but in that time, God powerfully spoke to him
- John experienced an open vision of Jesus Christ who appeared to him and told him to write letters to the 7 churches of Asia Minor
  - Modern-day Turkey
  - To encourage and correct them
  - These letters are recorded in the first 3 chapters of the book of Revelation
    - And what they teach is just as important for us today as it was for them nearly 2000 years ago

To this point we have read and examined the letter written to the church in Ephesus

- The church that had become so busy that they had lost their first love
- They were consumed with doing so that they forgot the most important aspect of being a Christian is knowing Jesus Christ in a personal relationship

The second letter was to the church in Smyrna

- A church that lived within intense persecution
- But they maintained their loyalty and faithfulness to God refusing to compromise

The third letter is the church in Pergamum

- This church had permitted the teachings of and about Jesus to become distorted
- They tolerated false teaching that twisted the truth of God and His love

The fourth letter was to the church of Thyatira

- They too compromised
- They allowed a woman, called a Jezebel, to promote false teaching that embraced the immorality of the pagan worship all around them

That brings us this morning to the church in Sardis

- Sardis is located about 30 miles east of Thyatira

- It was a city with a very proud and famous past
- They were once the capital of the Lydian kingdom some 600 or 700 years earlier
  - The Lydians emerged when the Hittite nation began to fade
- They were a very prosperous and wealthy nation with King Croesus as their ruler
  - Considered to be the wealthiest man in the world at that time
  - It sat at the intersection of 5 major highways, so that everyone had to come through Sardis
  - But only at their permission because the walls of the city were thought to be impregnable
- Thought to be...
  - History tells us that on two separate occasions, once in 549 BC and again in 218 BC the city was defeated in military attacks
  - And in both cases, the armies of Cyrus and Antiochus used the same tactic
  - They had their soldiers quietly scale the walls in surprise nighttime attacks
  - Add a devastating earthquake in 17 AD and, by the time of John's letter, you have a city and a people who have been rebuilding for the past 80 years
  - But they have become once again a very prosperous city due to its strategic location for trade and their wool-dyeing industry
  - They were finally conquered for good by the Persians and eventually became a part of the Roman empire
- Today, modern archeologists have found significant ruins in Sardis
  - There are the remains of both a second to third century Jewish synagogue
  - As well as early Christian as well as gnostic symbols of worship
  - There is even a picture of the evangelist John

### **READ – Revelation 3:1-6**

- This is perhaps the most stern of the letters to the five churches who received correction
  - Jesus says to them that they look and sound alive, but they are in fact dead
    - IOW they appear to have everything right
    - They look alive but we all know that appearances can be deceiving
    - And it was for the church in Sardis
  - But as we know, God cannot be fooled
    - Which makes this perhaps the saddest of the letters John wrote
    - They are a deceived church
      - Not by false teaching or compromise that had infiltrated the other churches
      - But by their own self-perceived solid reputation
  - But God does not allow for appearances that do not match the reality of what is true
    - That is deceit
    - That is also a lack of integrity
      - What is integrity?
      - It has been defined in many ways

- To some it is being the same person regardless of the circumstances
- To others it is who you are in private
- Still others it is how you act, what you do when no one will ever know and there is no chance you will ever be found out
- Do you still do the right thing, act the right way? That is integrity.
- God's words to them does not accuse them of hypocrisy
  - Hypocrisy is a killer of evangelism and inviting people to surrender their lives to Jesus
    - Too many who profess to be Christians live no differently than their neighbor who wants nothing to do with God
    - Even churches, proclaiming to be a place of love and acceptance, will exclude and use people to their own ends
    - And more often than not those ends are centered on financial, numerical and building growth rather than growth in the hearts of those who attend and are searching, hungry for a relationship with God
  - In fact, the problems of the church in Sardis are not specifically stated
  - What does seem evident is that they, while staying active (appearing to be alive) had lost their vision and purpose
  - They could be seen as dead spiritually or at least in danger of dying
  - But even in a state of near death, they and we are given hope as Jesus does not bury them, but tells them to 'wake up!'
- After all they have not been warned of false doctrine
  - No false teachers have been identified
  - There is no Balaam or Jezebel
  - The primary issue is that they have not taken their efforts for God to completion
    - In verse 2 Jesus says, *...I have found your deeds unfinished...*
    - Like the church in Pergamum, this church also had a strong reputation
      - But it was strong only in the eyes of man
      - And in the end it is not the opinion of man that should matter to us as a church or even as individuals
    - Jesus, however, in His love and mercy did not tell John to write the church of Sardis's obituary
    - There was then and is today a remedy...an answer
- John writes again in verse 2 for them to *...wake up! Strengthen what remains*
- Now, as in all things, that church had a choice



- Jesus said to them in verse 3 - *Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; hold it fast, and repent.*
  - What did they receive and hear?
    - The truth of who Jesus Christ is and what was done for them on the cross
  - What does hold it fast mean?
    - It means to obey what they have been taught
    - To live differently than the world does and reject the temptation to compromise
  - And then repent
    - To surrender daily to His will and confess the sins of our lives knowing that He will forgive us
    - The word repent is used so often but the visual of its meaning is powerful
    - IOL it is a Greek word *met-ann-oh-EH-oh*
  - Translates literally to turn and go in a different direction
    - That is truly what repentance is
    - To change your mind purposely and go, think, or act in a different way
  - That is why repentance must always be accompanied by an obvious change
    - To say you have repented and not change your thinking or your actions is to not have repented at all
    - Encourage you to daily ask the Holy Spirit to search your heart
  - A willingness to repent is one of the signs that a person is alert spiritually and not asleep
    - This is true for each of us and for the church at large
    - There has never been a more important time in our lives to be spiritually awake than right now

- Wake up!
- Remember what Jesus did for you!
- Obey His Word!
- And repent of your sins
- That is what it takes to never be taken by surprise in the middle of the night because you were sleeping.