

**Mount Up Wednesday**  
**The Wednesday Night Bible Study Ministry of**  
**East Mount Zion Baptist Church**  
**Dr. Brian A. Cash, Lead Pastor**  
**Kathy Booker, Exec. Pastor and Facilitator**  
**The Study of Revelation**  
**The Letter to the Church at Sardis**

*1 “And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: ‘The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars.*

*“I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead. 2 Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God. 3 Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you. 4 Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments, and they will walk with me in white, for they are worthy. 5 The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels. 6 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’*

**The History of Sardis:**

In 133 B.C., Sardis came under Roman rule and was distinguished as the capital city of a judicial district known as the Lydian settlements. A Lydian settlement refers to the towns, villages and estates inhabited by the people in the region of Lydia (modern western Turkey) during the Lydian and Persian periods (roughly 7<sup>th</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE). These settlements were strategically located for agricultural, resource procurement and defense. Sardis was one of the oldest and best defended cities in the region and the wealthy capital of the ancient kingdom of Lydia.

By the end of the first century B.C., it had become an important center of Christianity and home to a significant Jewish community.

**Significance of the Letter:**

The salutation to Sardis is from “*The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars.*” Only Jesus has the seven spirits (or “seven-fold Spirit,” meaning the complete or perfect Spirit of God), and only Jesus holds the seven stars, i.e., the seven angels (or pastors) of the seven churches (Rev. 1:20).

Jesus quickly and clearly condemns the lifeless state of the Sardian church: “I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead” (Rev. 3:2). This church may have had a good reputation, but they were spiritually lifeless. In other words, the church was filled with unsaved people going through the motions of religion. There were many tares among the wheat (Matthew 13:24-30).

Jesus then calls them to repent of their sin: “Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God. Remember, therefore, what you received and heard; obey it, and repent” (Rev. 3:2-3a). To “wake up” means to start paying attention to their need of salvation, to stop being careless about their heart’s condition before God.

Jesus notes the judgment that would take place if they did not repent: “If you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you” (Rev. 3:3b). A dead church, and one unrepentant in its deadness, will be disciplined by Jesus Himself.

After the warning, Jesus encourages those in Sardis who had remained faithful and makes a final promise to the believers.

Questions taken from the book Autopsy of a Deceased Church by Thom Ranier

1. If your church was given a physical exam today, what do you think the doctor’s diagnosis would be: healthy, slightly, sick, very sick or dying? Explain your answer.

-----

2. Jesus said that the church at Sardis had forgotten what they had received and heard. What might Jesus say about your church?

-----

-----

3. How would the budget and use of funds in a healthy church differ from that of a dying church?

-----

-----

4. How does the story of the rich young ruler in Mark 10 inform us about how a church might view the money it has?

-----

-----

5. Why do most dying churches have members who are nostalgic about the “good old days”? What are the biblical implications of that mindset?

-----

-----

6. What is a common theme between the heroes of Hebrews chapter 11?

-----

-----

7. What is the role and place of prayer in the early Jerusalem church in the context of Acts 2:41-47?

-----

--  
8. Why would a church's failure to engage in meaningful prayer lead to its demise?

-----  
-----  
--