

# Revelation

## The Churches

### CHURCH 5: SARDIS

Revelation 3:1-6



## BACKGROUND

The church at Sardis is fifth along the route. Located in modern-day Turkey (near the town of Sart), it was one of the most significant and wealthy cities of the ancient world. Once the capital of the Lydian Empire, its influence spanned several civilisations, including the Persians, Greeks, and Romans.



## INTRODUCTION

Nijay Gupta, in his book "Strange Religion" claims that modern Christians are like ancient pagans. He says:

- Christians must appease God to avoid his wrath and get his blessings.
  - We can donate money to make God like and bless us.
  - To be "saved" from hell and to heaven, just pray the magical Sinner's Prayer
1. What do you think of these statements?
  2. Do you think the "prosperity gospel" or "Christian Nationalism" make claims that are not entirely Christian as Gupta says?

## THOUGHTS

1. Why do you think there is no commendation for the church at Sardis?
2. Does the text suggest that riches and money led to the spiritual apathy at Sardis?
3. What do think it means that their deeds are "unfinished"? See v2 NIV
4. A commentator described Sardis as a "zombie church". To what extent do you agree with this description?
5. How important is it to have a good reputation in this context?
6. What stands out as the main message for the church at Sardis?

## SARDIS

The Church at Sardis, unlike the other churches, has no mention of persecution or false teachers (like the Nicolaitans). Scholars suggest the church had so thoroughly blended into the affluent, pagan culture of Sardis that it no longer posed a threat to anyone. The church was active and busy, maintaining a "name" or reputation for vitality, but Jesus declared their works were "incomplete" and lacked true spiritual life. There is no commendation for Sardis.

## APPLICATION

1. What can we do to complete or perfect our faith?
2. How can we avoid the pitfalls that Sardis fell into today?
3. Do you think it is easier for rich people to become complacent about their faith?
4. How do you think MPBC can maintain the kind of reputation that Jesus would commend?



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## THE CHURCH AT SARDIS

After the Lydians fell to the Persians in 546 BC, the city was later conquered by Alexander the Great and eventually became a major Roman provincial capital.



## SARDIS

**Location:** Situated at the foot of Mount Tmolus (Boz Dağ), it overlooked the fertile Hermus River valley.

**Birthplace of Money:** Sardis is credited as the first place where standardised gold and silver coins were minted, particularly under King Croesus in the 6th century BC. The Pactolus River ran through the city, famously carrying electrum, a natural gold-silver alloy.

**Temple of Artemis:** One of the largest Greek temples ever built, featuring massive columns that still stand today.

**The Gymnasium-Bath Complex:** A massive, partially restored Roman structure that served as a center for athletics and social life.

**The Synagogue:** Discovered in 1962, Sardis has the largest ancient synagogue ever found outside of Israel, known for its intricate floor mosaics and marble walls.

**Bin Tepe (Thousand Hills):** A massive necropolis north of the city featuring over 100 royal Lydian burial mounds, including the tumulus of King Alyattes, which is larger than some Egyptian pyramids.



Gymnasium



Temple of Artemis



The Synagogue

**Fortified City:** Sardis was built on an "impregnable" cliff, yet it was conquered twice (by the Persians and the Greeks) because its guards fell asleep and left a secret path unguarded.