

Revelation

ILLUSTRATED

The word 'Revelation' is rendered in a highly stylized, three-dimensional font that resembles molten gold or polished metal. The letters are thick and feature sharp, pointed edges. A bright light source from the upper left creates a strong highlight on the top surfaces of the letters, while the bottom surfaces are in shadow, giving them a sense of depth and weight. Below the main word, the word 'ILLUSTRATED' is written in a smaller, bold, sans-serif font. This text is contained within a golden ribbon that appears to be unrolling or draped across the bottom of the word 'Revelation'. The ribbon also has a metallic sheen and is set against a dark, almost black background.

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Sardis

■ Capital City the Lydian Kingdom



- Glorious past, mediocre at time of writing of Revelation
- Under King Croesus, accrued legendary wealth from mining gold from the Pactolus Stream that flowed through the marketplace.
- Historian Pliny reported Cyrus the Great of Persia on his conquest of Asia Minor carried away more than 20,000 pounds of gold (worth 565 million dollars today) mostly from Sardis.

Sardis

- Lower city heavily populated along the Hermus River
- Upper city served as an acropolis (mountain fortress)



- Protected by steep cliffs, made access extremely difficult and invasion virtually impossible.
- Captured 3 times during city's history, each time due to lack of vigilance on part of the inhabitants.





Battle of Croesus and Cyrus

■ In 547 BC, Croesus fled to the acropolis after attacking Cyrus



- Cyrus offered a reward for any soldier that could find a way to the top.
- One soldier saw a Lydian drop a helmet to the bottom and watched how he climbed down to get it and go back up.

Battle of Croesus and Cyrus

- The Persians waited for night then scaled the cliff at that point.



- Croesus had no guards posted thinking their position safe.
- The Persians quickly overran the city.
- The city was latter taken the same way by the Athenians and by Antiochus III.

Temple to goddess Artemis (Diana)

- 7th largest Greek temple in the world; double the size of the Parthenon





Greek Gymnasium and Roman Bath



Jewish Synagogue

- Dating from 3rd Century BC.
- Size points to great wealth
- Do Greek inscriptions and Lydian religious reliefs, and location with Roman gymnasium complex point to religious syncretism?







Jewish Synagogue Mosaic Floor

- Jewish community obviously influential.
- Josephus tells that Caesar gave approval for Sardis Jews to send money from synagogue to Jerusalem.
- Did they compromise with the pagan society around them?



To the angle of the church at Sardis
write:



“Him who Holds the Seven Spirits of God and the Seven Stars”

■ Seven Spirits or Sevenfold Spirit

- Before the throne in Rev 1:4
- Seven torches before the throne in Rev 4:5
- Seven horns and seven eyes sent out into all the earth in Rev 5:6
- Seven likely represents the fullness of God’s Spirit (like the seven seals, bowls, thunders, crowns, etc.); perfection/completeness not quantity
- Here Jesus holds the seven spirits; reference to Jesus possessing the fullness of God’s Spirit?

“Him who Holds the Seven Spirits of God and the Seven Stars”

■ Seven Stars

- Angels (messengers) of the seven churches
- Jesus in close contact with both the Spirit of God and the seven churches
- He knows fully the situation of each of the churches
- For Sardis, He knows their deeds: “you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead”



Complaint: “you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead”

- Harshest words to any church
 - Not weak, not sick, not in danger, but dead
- Jesus not impressed by a good reputation
 - Inside the façade of a living and active church was nothing but death and decay. (Graveyard)
 - Outward activity but their spirituality had died
- They had fallen asleep
 - Allowed themselves to compromise with the society around them?
 - Lack of spiritual vigilance led to their downfall



Application

- What contributes to a church having a good reputation even when dying?

Steps to Recovery

■ Wake Up!

– Else Jesus will come like a thief in the night

■ Compare Matt 24:43; I Thess 5:2

■ Immediate coming in judgment on the slumbering church

■ Can be avoided by the church waking up

■ Strengthen what remains and is about to die!

– Deeds are incomplete in the sight of God

– Religious rituals not accompanied by the heart?

■ Compare Joel 2:12-13; Ps 51:16-17; Hosea 6:6

■ Forms versus power and devotion



Application

- What can be done to strengthen a dying church?

Steps to Recovery

- Remember what you have received and heard
 - They knew what they should be doing
 - They need to remember and obey it
- Repent
 - Not an emotion, but change (I Thess. 1:9)
 - Turn away from one thing and turn toward another
 - What did they need to turn away from?
 - Lackluster deeds
 - Pagan culture
 - What did they need to turn toward?
 - What they once had



He who overcomes

■ Some have not soiled their clothes

– They will:

- Walk with Jesus
- Wear white clothes

– For they are worthy (Rev. 4 and 5)



■ He who overcomes (victors)

– Will wear white (Comp. Rev. 6 and 7)

- Martyrs from Tribulation
- Purity, Festivity, Victory

– Will not be blotted out of the book of life

- Jesus will acknowledge their name before the Father
- Ps 69:28; Dan. 12:1; Phil. 4:3; Matt 10:32-33

Application

- What can we do to make sure our clothes remain unsoiled?
- After studying this letter:
 - What are the healthy things about our church?
 - What would you change about our congregation?