

SEVEN

CHURCHES IN REVELATION



- Church in Sardis
- June 21, 2026
- Shalom Ministries International

SMI Pastors' Seminar

- SHAPE Seminar
 - June 22-24, 2026
 - Friendship Lodge (Lusaka, Zambia)
 - 35 pastors will participate
 - Pastors from DRC: Marc Musimbi; Josue Baraka; Alain Miya;
 - Pastor David Light from Uganda;
 - Pastor Tow Both from S. Sudan
 - Pastors from Zambia (30 pastors).

The Church that Jesus Left

- Jesus left the temple
 - **Jesus left the temple** and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings. “Do you see all these things?” he asked. “Truly I tell you, not one stone here will be left on another; everyone will be thrown down (Matthew 24:1-2).
- What is the church?
 - Lord I love the temple where you live, where your glory is (Psalm 26:8).
 - Has this house, which bears my Name, become a den of robbers to you? But I have been watching! declares the LORD (Jeremiah 7:11).
 - They set up their vile images in the house that bears my Name and defiled it (Jeremiah 32:34).
 - “It is written,” he said to them, ““My house will be called a house of prayer,’^[a] but you are making it ‘a den of robbers” (Matthew 21:13).
 - Look, your house is left to you desolate (Matthew 23:38).

To the Angel of the Church in Sardis

These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have found your deeds unfinished in the sight of my God. Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; hold it fast, and repent. But 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.

Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy. The one who is victorious will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out the name of that person from the book of life, but will acknowledge that name before my Father and his angels. Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches (Revelation 3:1-6).

The Church at Sardis

- Sardis was one of the oldest cities in Asia Minor
 - 30 miles southeast of Thyatira.
 - Sardis was a great commercial center of the woolen industry.
- The church at peace
 - The church was not plagued by emperor worship, nor was it disturbed by Jews or Nicolaitans.
 - They weren't facing intense persecution or heresy like other churches in Revelation; Their primary threat is internal decay resulting from comfort and complacency
 - You have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead (Revelation 3:1).
 - The church looks like alive in the sight of men, but in the sight of God the congregation is dead.
- Which is important? Human reputation or God's assessment?
 - Human reputation: A large membership, a beautiful building, numerous ministries, material wealth, and financial success.
 - God's evaluation: Spiritually dead. Christ gives no word of praise or commendation.

Causes of Spiritual Death

- Reliance on reputation rather than reality
 - A church can become spiritually dead when it becomes more concerned with maintaining its image, traditions, history, or accomplishments than with its present relationship with Christ.
- Incomplete obedience
 - The church at Sardis started well but failed to persevere in faithful obedience. Spiritual decline often begins when believers become complacent and stop pursuing holiness, discipleship, and mission.
- Spiritual sleep and lack of vigilance
 - The believers were not alert to their condition, nor were they guarding their faith.
 - Spiritual deadness develops gradually through neglect of prayer, Scripture, worship, and dependence on the Holy Spirit.
- Lack of repentance
 - Spiritual deadness persists when individuals and congregations refuse to acknowledge sin, pride, self-sufficiency, or compromise.

Admonition to the Church at Sardis

- Remember, hold fast and repent
 - **Wake up!** Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have found your deeds unfinished (less than what God wants) in the sight of my God. Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; hold it fast, and **repent**. But 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 (Revelation 3:2-3).
- Wake up (be watchful) and strengthen what remains
 - Be watchful at the weak points and the strong points;
 - All is not yet lost. Even though the church was functionally dead, a tiny spark of genuine faith remained.
 - Your deeds unfinished: The Sardis church started well but didn't finish. They were going through the motions of ministry, but failing to meet God's standard.
- Reputation is not reality
 - A church can look vibrant, active, and successful to the world while being completely stagnant in the eyes of God. The remedy for this spiritual drift is immediate alertness, returning to foundational truths, and active repentance.

The Church with a Remnant

- A few people... who have not soiled their clothes
 - Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled (unstained) their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy (Revelation 3:4).
 - There was still a remnant who do not compromise, who will walk with Jesus. They remained spiritually pure, morally upright, and deeply dedicated.
- White garments: Dressed in white, for they are worthy
 - Purity and victory: White was the color worn by Roman citizens during triumphal victory processions.
 - Justification: It represents being cleansed from sin by the blood of Christ.
 - Resurrection: It points to the future glorified state of believers in eternity.
- Individual accountability
 - Even if a church is spiritually dead or compromised, it is entirely possible for an individual to maintain their integrity, keep their garments clean, and walk intimately with Christ.

The Promise to the One who Overcomes

- Eternal rewards for those who remain spiritually vigilant
 - The one who is victorious will be dressed in white. I will never blot out the name of that person from the book of life, but will acknowledge that name before my Father and his angels. Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches (Revelation 3:5-6).
- Eternal security
 - Jesus offers a definitive, permanent guarantee of citizenship in His kingdom.
- Public vindication
 - To the faithful in Sardis, who may have been marginalized, ridiculed, or ignored by both the pagan society and their own dying church, Jesus promises public honor.
- The universal call
 - A global message: Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Reflective Questions

- The church in Sardis had a reputation for being alive, but Jesus saw what others could not see. The same Lord who examined Sardis examines our hearts today.
- Let us not be content with a name, a history, or an appearance of faithfulness. Instead, let us wake up, strengthen what remains, and renew our walk with Christ. For what ultimately matters is not what people think about us, but what Christ sees in us.
- It invites to look beyond outward appearances and ask difficult but necessary questions:
 - Are we living on the memories of past spiritual victories, or are we pursuing Christ passionately today?
 - Have your church activities replaced a genuine relationship with Jesus?
 - Do others see you as spiritually strong while your hearts have grown distant from God?
 - Are you more concerned about your reputation before people than the reality before Christ?