

# Ministries of New Life

## Revelation - Lesson 9

### SEVEN CHURCHES

#### SARDIS

Marilyn lake Griffin  
Revelation Lesson 9  
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Sardis

*“Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.”*

(Rev 2:7 NIV).

### REWARDS FOR OVERCOMERS

OVERCOMER	MESSIAH'S MILLENNIAL REIGN	AGE TO COME
Ephesus - Rev. 2:7		Rev. 22:2
Smyrna - Rev. 2:11		Rev. 20:6
Pergamum - Rev. 2:17		Rev. 22:4
Thyatira - Rev. 2:28		Rev. 22:16

### THE SEVEN CHURCHES HISTORICALLY PARALLEL THE ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY OF THE CHURCH AGE

LETTER TO THE CHURCH AT	ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY	PERIOD IN CHURCH HISTORY
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1. EPHESUS (2:1-7) REPRESENTS  
LEADERSHIP: JEWISH TO APPROX. 65 A.D.;
2. SMYRNA (2:8-11) REPRESENTS
3. PERGAMUM (2:12-17) REPRESENTS
4. THYATIRA (2:18-28) REPRESENTS

*“Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.”*

(Rev 2:7 NIV)

## SEVEN CHURCHES

### I. MESSIAH’S MESSAGE TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES.

#### A. LETTER TO EPHESUS 2:1-7

#### B. Letter to Smyrna 2:8-11

#### C. LETTER TO PERGAMUM 2:12-17

#### D. LETTER TO THYATIRA 2:18-29

#### E. LETTER TO SARDIS

- **READ 3:1-6**

##### 1. The Church at Sardis

Sardis was about thirty miles south of Thyatira.

It was one of the oldest and most renowned cities of Western Asia.

Sardis was a wealthy city, the capital of Lydia and known for its decadence.

The wealthy Croesus was king of Sardis from 560 -546 B.C.

The city was a trading center for wool and dyeing industry.

It was the home of the famous Greek writer Aesop.

The city’s patron deity Cybele, whose image appeared on their coins, was credited to have power to raise the dead. The city was thought impregnable, however Cyrus the Great of Persia took the city in the sixth century B.C.

In A.D. 17 Sardis suffered greatly from an earthquake.

Dr. Feinberg records, “When John wrote this letter, the city was a city of the past. Later it was restored and continued to flourish until 1400-1403 A.D., when the Tamerlane swept over the area and destroyed everything. The city never recovered after that desolation.”

Ryrie and Feinberg feel the word “Sardis” is probably from a Hebrew word meaning “remnant.”

##### 2. Salutation to the Angel at Sardis:

To the Church at Sardis, Christ the Messiah presents Himself as the One having the seven Spirits and the seven Stars.

He is the One having the fullness of the Spirit: wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge and the fear of the LORD. He exercises all power and authority over the angels, the leadership of the churches.

Sardis represents the Reformation Age which is credited to the Spirit’s illumination, “*the just shall live by faith.*” The deep seated moral and spiritual corruption of the church of the Middle Ages coupled with the move of the Spirit upon godly leaders who began preaching “faith versus dead works” brought about the much needed reform. However the Reformation Age gave way to professionalism void of the Spirit resulting in Dead Orthodoxy.

### 3. Commendation:

The Sardis letter contains no specific commendation. Whatever the church had been, it now retained only a remnant of those who had experienced the original zeal of the Spirit and spirituality. Dr. Henry Morris states, “The church had once been known as a strong, Christ-honoring church. They still used the name of Christ, and were outwardly a church of Christ, but the life was gone. Evidently most of the members were professing Christians, but not truly regenerate, and thus only going through the motions of religion. This situation is sadly true of multitudes of churches today.” Each of the previous four churches had been commended by Christ Messiah for certain good works. However there is none sufficient to warrant any approbation for Sardis. Our works might be outwardly impressive toward man, but if our heart motivation is wrong it will not impress or pass the Spirit’s test of approval.

### 4. Correction:

Sardis is first condemned for its lifeless condition (v. 1). The One with burning eyes who discerned the true condition at Thyatira now speaks with like solemnity to Sardis, “I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead.

### 5. Admonition:

“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” (3:2). This is an outright call to *Teshuvah*.

Dr. Feinberg points out, “The measure of its privilege and profession was the measure of its responsibility. It (Sardis) was full of empty profession, hence dead. Again, the union of church and state brought about more profession than life.

The call to wake up and be watchful was directed to the **spiritual leaders** to carry out their responsibility...truth was recovered in the Reformation...The Sardis believers are alerted to recall how much of recovered truth they had, and to keep the good they had received. **They needed to repent of the inadequate use they were making of it.**

If the church did not awake, they were in danger of meeting Christ when they were not ready (v.3).

The Lord does not come to believers as a thief, but to professors only.

Dr. Morris writes, “The remedy for lethargy and routine religiosity is an awakening to the imminence of Christ’s return. “Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when He appears we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who thus hopes in Him purifies himself as he is pure” (1 John 3:2-3).

### 6. Reward:

Note: The overcomer will be clothed in white garments and their name secure in the Book of Life. Both relate to Christ Messiah’s second coming (Rev 19:8, 14).

**The Book of Life**, Personal Position: Since the LORD is the creator of life and life begins at conception (Job 33:4;10:8; Ps 104:30; 139:13-16; Ecc 11:5; 12:7) the name of every human ever conceived in the womb are recorded in the Book of Life. The Messiah died for every human being ever created and His blood atones for every sin committed by each individual from conception to their death (Rom 5:15-19). At the time of death, if an individual has not accepted the Father’s provision for forgiveness of their sin that name is blotted out of the Book of Life; or at any given time an individual crosses a line determined by the Father and willfully grieves and rejects the Father’s Gift, of His Son that name is blotted out of the Book of Life. (Names blotted out of the Book of Life are never restored).

**II. REWARDS FOR OVERCOMERS**

<b>OVERCOMER</b>	<b>MESSIAH'S MILLENNIAL REIGN</b>	<b>AGE TO COME</b>
Ephesus - Rev. 2:7	Eat of the Tree of Life	Rev. 22:2
Smyrna - Rev. 2:11	Receive Crown of Life, Escape second death	Rev. 20:6
Pergamum - Rev. 2:17	Eat hidden manna, receive white stone, new name	Rev. 22:4
Thyatira - Rev. 2:28	Authority over nations, Morning Star	Rev. 22:16
Sardis - Rev. 3:5	White Garments, Name in Book of Life	Rev. 19:8
Philadelphia - Rev. 3:12		
Laodicea - Rev. 3:21		

**III. THE SEVEN CHURCHES HISTORICALLY PARALLEL THE ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY OF THE CHURCH AGE**

<b>LETTER TO THE CHURCH AT</b>	<b>ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY</b>	<b>PERIOD IN CHURCH HISTORY</b>
<b>1. EPHESUS (2:1-7) REPRESENTS</b> LEADERSHIP: JEWISH TO APPROX. 65 A.D.;	APOSTOLIC AGE	30 - 100 A.D.
<b>2. SMYRNA (2:8-11) REPRESENTS</b>	AGE OF PERSECUTION	100 - 313 A.D.
<b>3. PERGAMUM (2:12-17) REPRESENTS</b> CONSTANTINIAN ERA	IMPERIAL CHURCH AGE	313 - 606 A.D.
<b>4. THYATIRA</b>	AGE OF PAPACY	590 - 1517 A.D.
<b>5. SARDIS</b>	REFORMATION AGE	1517 - 1730 A.D.