

## Patmos and the Seven Churches of Asia

By Doug Hamilton

even though it isn't really a star at all. During other parts of the year, Venus becomes an *evening* star, setting in the west, after the sun.



The fact that it is the morning star is important. The morning star is the last thing one can see from the heavens as the night begins to fade, ushering in the hope of a new day. This would be the rejuvenating factor for all the Christians going through trying times. It is what Peter recorded in *2 Pet 1:19* *And {so} we have the prophetic word {made} more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day*

*dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.*

Brothers and sisters, it does not matter what you and I are going through in our lives if we are right with God. No matter how dark the nights, no matter how dark Satan has made it the situation and no matter if our hopes have been darkened through attacks of the world, **JESUS IS OUR MORNING STAR!** He is ushering a brand new day filled with the light of the glorious gospel of God!

### Conclusion:

In a world where tolerance is the name of the game, the church needs to make sure they are not a tolerant church when it comes to sin. If we will not take the loving steps to cause men to repent from their sin, are we prepared to be shattered like the pottery that we are? If we will repent, Jesus will be that morning star ushering in the hope of the new day. We must not be tolerant for evil!

# Patmos and the Seven Churches of Asia

By Doug Hamilton

## **V) The Church at Sardis (3:1-6)**

*Rev 3:1 "And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: He who has the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars, says this: 'I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.'*

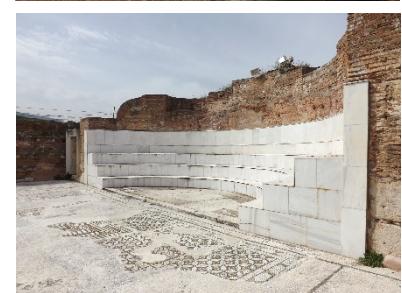
Seven centuries prior to the writing of this letter, Sardis was one of the greatest cities of the world. The original location of the old city was on top of a 1500 foot cliff over-looking the fertile Hermus valley, making it nearly impregnable. It was considered the watchtower city for the region. As time went passed and the population grew, the living space on top of the peak ran out. This resulted in a newer section of city being established at the foot of the mountain, making it a plural city, upper and lower Sardis. This is why the name *Sardis* is actually plural in the Greek, for they were two cities.

Sardis was once a wealthy city, sporting a large Roman gymnasium, a massive synagogue and many other fine works of architecture. Through the lower town flowed the Pactolus River, which for centuries was mined for gold, supporting the initial wealth of the city region. These glory days were over by the time of the writing and the city was in a state of decline. By AD 17 the entire town was leveled by an earthquake, requiring Emperor Tiberius to rebuild it.

Jesus reminded them that He has the seven spirits and the seven stars; He is keeping a close eye out on them. Did you know that Jesus is keeping a close eye on us?

- *Prov 5:21 "For the ways of a man are before the eyes of the LORD, and He watches all his paths."*
- *Prov 16:2 "All the ways of a man are clean in his own sight, but the LORD weighs the motives."*
- *Job 34:21 "'For His eyes are upon the ways of a man, and He sees all his steps."*
- *Ps 19:14 "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Thy sight, O LORD, my rock and my Redeemer."*
- *Heb 4:13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.*

Sometimes we might believe we are putting something over on God, but it is not true. We may think the seven stars, which are the seven witnesses that are giving the seven testimonies to Jesus, have their eyes covered with a blindfold, but in reality they have 20/20 vision. They see the acts of anger against a brother and hear all the unfaithful sayings uttered from our lips. Let us be honest with Jesus, for He is the One with the seven stars.



## Patmos and the Seven Churches of Asia

By Doug Hamilton

John recorded *“I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.”* The church in Sardis had a name, but that is all they had. In reality they were **graveyard dead**. They were probably the type of church who went through all the motions of worship: two songs, a prayer, one song, the Lord’s supper, one song, one sermon, one invitation, one closing prayer and then it was off to beat the rush at the community buffet. We don’t know for sure, but one thing that we do know is they were simply going through the motions and living on their name from the past.

Do you think this could happen today? Is it possible to have dead worship in the twenty-first century? Do you think it is possible for a congregation to appear to do the will of the Lord, going through all the motions of our life to God? Our laurels are not going to allow us in for our deeds will follow us.

*Rev 3:2-3 Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God. <sup>3</sup> Remember therefore what you have received and heard; and keep {it,} and repent. If therefore you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come upon you.*

Sardis has quite a history. It was once a well-known retreat town for those in the military. As mentioned, Sardis was set up in a 1,500-foot natural fortress that was nearly impenetrable, that is until King Croesus used it. Centuries prior to the writing of the letter, he had attacked the forces of Cyrus, lost the battle and then retreated to the safety of his fortress. He was confident no army could defeat him from that location. When Cyrus arrived with his troops and surrounded the city, he offered a special reward for the person who could figure out how to overtake the city. Late one afternoon, a warrior of Cyrus spotted a Sardian soldier accidentally dropping his helmet down the side of the steep cliff. A short time later, they again witnessed a hand emerge from behind some bushes and retrieve the helmet. They determined that there was some sort of hidden crevasse which the Sardians climbed down through, and sure enough, it was found. That night a small group of soldiers climbed up along the secret passage and broke into the city to find that there was not even a guard on watch. The Sardians were so confident that they did not even post a watch for the safety of the city, allowing them to come in like a “Thief in the Night”. One would think they would have learned their lesson, but 300 years later, the troops of Antiochus III did the same thing while the troops once again slept in comfort. **Twice in three centuries the Sardians slept and were overtaken as a result.**



What does that say to us? If we ever become a dead church family who trusts in salvation through association, how strong is that fortress? Unless the Lord builds the house, do they not labor in vain that build it? Jesus sees all and knows all. He is prepared to come as the thief in the night if we are willing to sleep rather than being on guard.

Do we believe the Bible when it says in 1Thes 5:2 *For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night?* Do we heed the words of 1Thes 5:6 *“...so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober?”* Do we trust God when He reminds us in 2 Pet 3:10 *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens*

## Patmos and the Seven Churches of Asia

By Doug Hamilton

*will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up?* Saying we are prepared and being prepared are two different things; we best not to confuse them. Change your life while there is still time, for “*the master will come on a day when we do not expect {him} and at an hour which we does not know...*” As Paul wrote in Rom 13:11 “*And this {do,} knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed.*” We must be ready!

*Rev 3:4 'But you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white; for they are worthy.*

Not everyone in Sardis soiled their garments. Some did not go the way of the “graveyard dead” Christians, for they chose to follow the ways of Christ. They chose to not go the way of the Christian zombies. We must also strive to not live with a dead faith.

- *Luke 15:24 “...for this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found.’ And they began to be merry.”*
- *Ephesians 2:5-6 “...even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), <sup>6</sup> and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus...”*
- *Rom 6:13 “present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members {as} instruments of righteousness to God.”*

*Rev 3:5-6 'He who overcomes shall thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels. <sup>6</sup> 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'*

If they overcome, they will be allowed to wear white garments. What do the white garments communicate? **It proclaims festivity; it proclaims victory; it proclaims purity.**

- *Eccl 9:8 “Let your clothes be white all the time, and let not oil be lacking on your head.”*
- *Isa 1:18 “...Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool.*
- *Ps 51:7 Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.*

Wearing white not only has to do with what Jesus did for us, but what we do for Him. He wants us to walk as one who has been cleansed. What happens when we are wearing white? Have you ever noticed you are careful to not spill on whatever it is you are wearing? Does it not make sense that we should walk in our lives as though we are wearing white?

What about the “*book of life*”? The phrase originated from the ancient custom of the recording of genealogies, which were very important to this people. **Being recorded in the Book of Life communicates forgiveness, acceptance and eternity.**

## Patmos and the Seven Churches of Asia

By Doug Hamilton

- *Exod 32:32 "But now, if Thou wilt, forgive their sin-- and if not, please blot me out from Thy book which Thou hast written!"*
- *Ps 69:28 May they be blotted out of the book of life, and may they not be recorded with the righteous.*
- *Phil 4:3 Indeed, true comrade, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in {the cause of} the gospel, together with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.*

Promise three is the confession of Jesus. What sweeter phrase could roll off the tongue of Jesus than the admission that we are with Him? When we need Him the most as we stand before the White Throne of judgment, Jesus will confess our name before the Father. Matt 10:32-33 *"Everyone therefore who shall confess Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever shall deny Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.* If we choose not to commit to and serve Christ, then be prepared for Jesus to declare 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'" We make that decision today.

### **Conclusion:**

At all cost we must avoid ever becoming a "graveyard dead" church family. We must strive to not be walking Zombies in the kingdom of God. We must seek to put something into to our worship services before we can expect taking something out of it. We must be prepared to put something into our service to God before we expect to take anything emotionally gratifying from it. Modifying what one leader said, "Ask not what your God can do for you, but ask what you can do for your God." Anything less than that can and will lead us into a graveyard dead relationship which will benefit nobody in the end.