

**GROWTH GROUPS**  
**WEEK 6**  
WEEK OF FEBRUARY 17TH

# *Dear Church,*

## *The Seven Letters of Revelation*



GROWTH GROUP WINTER 2019 – DEAR CHURCH,  
WEEK 6 – FEBRUARY 17, 2019 - REVELATION 3:1-6

### GETTING TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER

- 1) Think about the history of the church from when you were a child to today. Where have you seen the church have influence? Where do you think the church has lost its way or lost its influence?

### SETTING THE CONTEXT

In the sixth century B.C. Sardis was one of the most powerful cities in their region. It sat atop a steep hill with rock walls that extended some 1500 feet above the lower valley. As the city grew, a lower city that was northwest of the fortified city was also developed. Excavations that have occurred in the lower city have revealed a Roman theater and stadium, as well as an exceptionally large (160 by 300 feet) temple dedicated to Artemis. Upon this foundation another temple was built and dedicated to Cybele, who was believed to possess the power of restoring the dead to life.

No opposing army had ever been able to gain access to the main city of Sardis because of its geography. The people felt comfortable and safe until Cyrus the Persian, who we read about in the Old Testament, found a way to conquer Sardis around 550 BC. The confidence of the people was destroyed. The city would fall again around 300 BC.

The city of Sardis had been an influential and wealthy city. They claimed to have been the first to have figured out how to dye wool and it was also where the first gold and silver coins were made. Yet in spite of all their successes and supposed security, the city had rested on their reputation and failed to maintain their vigilance.

The church in Sardis was facing a similar issue. They were resting on their reputation and they needed to wake up. Jesus tells them that he has looked at their works and they have been found lacking. They appear to be busy doing good works, but in reality they were accomplishing little for the kingdom.

The church is also told to remember what they had heard and been taught and to hold on to those truths. Jesus implies that if the church in Sardis does not get things right, he will surprise them just as Cyrus had surprised the city of Sardis. Jesus will come like a thief in the night which is echoed in both the writings of Paul (1 Thessalonians 5:2) and Peter (2 Peter 3:10). This language is also found in Matthew 24:43.



There is a threefold promise given to the believers at Sardis. First, they will be dressed in white. This may represent an attire appropriate for one who will receive the heavenly state. Secondly, their name will be found in the book of life which is alluded to in Exodus 32:32-33, as well as Psalm 69:28 and Daniel 12:1. Finally, Jesus says he will acknowledge them before his Father and the angels which is reflected in Matthew 10:32.

## EXPLORING THE TEXT

### Read Revelation 3:1-6

<sup>1</sup> *“To the angel of the church in Sardis write: 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.”* <sup>2</sup> *Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have found your deeds unfinished in the sight of my God.* <sup>3</sup> *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.* <sup>4</sup> *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.* <sup>5</sup> *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.* <sup>6</sup> *Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*

- 2) The church at Sardis does not appear to have faced any persecution or trials, yet Jesus has concerns about their faithfulness. How can a lack of persecution or trials impact a church? Do you think that a church that is comfortable in its culture is less effective or more effective?
- 3) What does Jesus mean when he tells the church at Sardis that they have a “reputation of being alive, but you are dead.” These are strong words. Is the church of today guilty of the same thing? Why or why not?
- 4) Jesus says that he has found their deeds unfinished in the sight of God. What sort of deeds would that church have left unfinished? In what ways could today’s church be guilty of the same thing? What can we do about that?
- 5) One of the major issues of the church at Sardis seems to revolve around the idea of complacency. How would you define complacency and how do churches avoid becoming complacent?
- 6) Is there an area of your own faith life where you feel like you have grown complacent?
- 7) Is the promise of verse 5 helpful for you as you think about persevering in the faith?

## BRINGING IT HOME

- 8) What are the marks of an alive church? What can you do to help LJPC be a more “alive” church?