

Revelation 5 –

1. Continuing with our messages to the churches. **Revelation 3:1-6.** Sardis was a “once was” town. It used to be a royal city. It used to be a shining light. Now...it was a town that was slowly dying due to the wealth and laziness of its people. It was known for its tall, almost impregnable acropolis...which had been taken twice...and for its huge necropolis (burial ground). Jesus uses this against the church by saying it had a reputation of being alive but it was really dead.
2. The town was well known for being full of people who were spoiled by inherited wealth and who were not doing anything to make their town great again. It seems the church was also just flowing along (think of churches that rely on tourists or transient military to stay alive).
3. It was against the law in the Roman Empire to approach the temples with stained or soiled garments. Jesus uses this to say that too many in Sardis had soiled their garments (the only industry left there was a wool market). They were losing their ability and right to approach Jesus and, therefore, in danger of having their name blotted out of the Book of Life.
4. **Revelation 3:7-13.** Philadelphia was a huge Greek town that became a huge Roman one. It lived in both worlds and had a wealthy, powerful Jewish community that did not like the Christians. Again, it was likely that they didn't want any attention called on them so they alerted the authorities that Christians were not the same as Jews. Sowing division among believers is considered one of the worst things a believer can do – so, “synagogue of Satan.”
5. The church in Philadelphia would, indeed, survive and even thrive while churches all around it failed or were on the run. Historians say this was due, in large part, to a woman named Ammia who was widely regarded as a prophetess. She was lauded by writers in the ancient world and modern historians as the equal to Agabus and the four daughters of Phillip. This church would survive even the Muslim takeover of the area. It was the last remaining of the churches and lasted until at least 1392.

6. Jesus opens the door for them – and they became the first and greatest missionary city. No attacks from the Jewish community or from the local pagans would shut their door.
7. **Revelation 3:14-22**. Laodicea was the wealthiest town in the area. They produced an eye salve that was known throughout the empire. They also produced black wool. The only thing they lacked was good water; their springs were lukewarm and tasted bad.
8. We use the term “lukewarm” to mean something not really good or bad, not pro-Jesus or anti-Jesus. That is not what they meant. To them, there was a use for hot water and a use for cold water, but no use for lukewarm water. They were having zero impact on their community. (ministries need to ask themselves periodically if they are useful for Christ or merely pets for the faithful)
9. They were set up with a choice to make: invite Jesus in and let him do what he wants to do with you or continue in your wretched, naked, and broken state until you fade away. (many churches make the wrong call)
10. For next week, read the setup for the rest of the Book and its message. That will be chapters 4-9. Read them quickly. Do not read for analysis. Do not dissect and assign meanings to images: just hear and see them.
11. If time allows, read **Revelation 4:1-8**.