

# UNSTOPPABLE CHURCH

*Then* and *Now*  
in 30 Minutes



## Episode 49 - Awakened

[Listen Now](#)

## THE SETTING



We're now in **Sardis** in Turkey, 35 miles (56 km) south-east of Thyatira. The city was originally set on top of an acropolis with 1,500 feet (460 m) cliffs on three sides and a steep approach on the other, making it virtually impregnable. Its natural defences had made it the capital of great kingdoms in the past, but by the late 1st century its importance had waned, and the main city was now located, not on the acropolis, but on the plain below. Although still wealthy, thanks to the electrum (a natural gold and silver alloy) in the surrounding mountains and the discovery of how to separate the gold and silver, the city was really living off its past reputation.

Although a city with many cults, the principal deity here was Cybele (the mother of gods and humans, whose priests were castrated). Yet the biggest temple was to Artemis - a huge structure, over twice the size of Athens' Parthenon, and one of the seven largest temples in the world of that time. It also had a large, powerful, wealthy Jewish community that had long been a respected part of public life.

Surprisingly, despite all these religious alternatives, the church in Sardis had experienced no persecution - and because of that, no life.



The temple of Artemis in Sardis with the acropolis in the background



Ruins of the Jewish synagogue showing beautiful floor mosaics reflecting the wealth of its members (the roof is modern for protection)



# BIBLE READING

[Revelation 3:1-6](#)

# KEY IDEAS



## ***Christ knows the church***

The letter to Sardis, the fifth and shortest of the seven letters, begins again with a reminder of who Jesus is and of how he knows us and the church through and through (v 1). The next words - "I know your deeds" - sound like what is coming will be a commendation"; but what follows shows it isn't.

## ***The challenge***

What follows is a challenge about what they had allowed themselves to drift into - living off their past reputation (v 1), leading to them now serving Christ only half-heartedly with "deeds unfinished" (v 2).

Does that mean they never finished what they started? Or were they just not getting on with evangelism in their own generation, relying instead on the fruit of a former generation? Either way, they had become the perfect model of inoffensive Christianity in their comfortable, middle-class environment; and Jesus therefore says that they are, quite simply, "dead" (v 1).

## ***The call***

Jesus calls them to "wake up" (v 2) - a Greek expression that literally means 'keep on being watchful'. And that was full of significance for Sardis. For although it had seemed an impregnable fortress with its mighty acropolis, it had been defeated twice - in 546 BC and 214 BC - because the watchmen had fallen asleep on both occasions. Over confidence is a dangerous thing!

But not only are they to wake up and keep watchful, spiritually speaking, they are to return to the message that they first received. And if they don't...

### **The warning**

“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” (v3) - a picture here, not of the second coming as elsewhere in the New Testament (e.g. [1 Thess 5:1-2](#)), but of Christ’s coming in judgment against their church.

### **The promise**

And yet, once again, it is not too late to change. If they will hear what is being said and repent, then those who have not “soiled their garments” will be with Christ in eternity (v4-5) - a particularly suitable image for the church in Sardis, a city known for its textile industry and where many temples barred worshippers with soiled garments. They will be given white garments, assuring them of access to God, and they will have their names written in the book of life, never to be removed (v 4-5).



1. Can you confidently say that your own name is written in the book of life, not because of anything to do with you, but because of your faith in Christ and his death on the cross?
2. Where does the Church of today rely on past reputation rather than ongoing effectiveness?
3. How could hearing Christ’s call to be awakened once again help us become unstoppable Church?



For a behind-the-scenes glimpse into what was involved to create this podcast series listen to Mike and David recounting their experiences!

[Listen Now](#)

How about listening to other UCB Bible-based podcasts from Mike and David:

*Bible Books in 30 Minutes*

*Bible Biogs in 30 Minutes*

*Bible Surprises! in 30 Minutes*

and the series that preceded

*Unstoppable Church, Then and Now in 30 Minutes*

called *Jesus, Then And Now in 30 Minutes*.

They are all available on the UCB Player app and from other podcast providers.

Why not download UCB Player from your app store now?

**Download the free UCB Player app now.**



**UCB** UNITED  
CHRISTIAN  
BROADCASTERS



[Privacy](#)

[Terms](#)

[View Online](#)

[Unsubscribe](#)

© 2024 United Christian Broadcasters Ltd.

Company registered in England & Wales 2182533. Registered Charity 299128