

Sardis: The Church That Was Dead Revelation 3:1-6

INTRO: Sardis had a name that it was alive but in reality this church was dead.

The city of Sardis had a 2,000 year history and was the ancient capitol of Lydia. It was located fifty miles east of Smyrna and thirty miles southeast of Thyatira. Sardis was an important and wealthy city located at the junction of five main roads.

Textile manufacturing, the dye industry, and the jewelry trade helped to make Sardis a wealthy city. Christ made reference to the woolen garments manufactured in Sardis (vs 5).

When John wrote the Revelation, Sardis was but a shadow of its illustrious past. The church at Sardis too, was like the city – fading.

I. VS 1a, CHRIST DESCRIBED

- A. He is the one who has the fullness of the Holy Spirit (1:4, 4:5, 5:6).
 - 1. There is but one Holy Spirit (Eph 4:4). The number seven describes the fullness and completeness of the Spirit.
 - 2. Life is what the church at Sardis needed, and this is exactly what the Holy Spirit gives. The church needs the burning lamps of Revelations 4:5.
 - 3. Christ is the one who has the seven spirits of God; He has the characteristics of the Spirit as referred to in Isaiah 11:2-5.
 - 4. “When the Spirit is grieved, the church begins to lose life and power. When sin is confessed and church members get right with God and with each other, then the Spirit infuses new life– revival” (Wiersbe 37).
- B. Christ is the one with the seven stars in His hand (1:20).
 - 1. “...Christ makes their [pastors] leadership and transmission of the message all the more authoritative and responsible” (Walvoord 80).
 - 2. The pastor must give account directly to Christ Himself for his actions (Heb 13:17).

II. VS 1b, THE CONDITION OF THE CHURCH AT SARDIS DESCRIBED

- A. “I know thy works.”
 - 1. The actions and the testimony of the church at Sardis were

- laid bare before the all seeing, all knowing Jesus.
2. Christ saw what man could not see.
 3. What He sees is described in the last part of this verse.
- B. "Thou hast a name, that thou livest, and art dead."
1. This church had a reputation of being alive, but it was dead. Other churches thought Sardis was a spiritual church, but it wasn't.
 2. This church was a good looking corpse. Haven't you heard people say of a dead person in the casket. "She sure looks good, looks as though she is still alive, looks as if she could talk, even get up out of there....."
 - a. There are churches today that are dead, although they look alive. They have a big program, lots of activities, but spiritually they are a corpse.
 - b. Keep this in mind, the dead don't love; and they don't care. There are churches filled with folks who don't love and don't care.
 3. What is it that killed the church at Sardis? The answer is sin (Eph 2:1, I Tim 5:6, I Jn 3:14). Are you or your family contributing to the death of the church?
 4. When is a church in danger of dying?
 - a. When it lives in the past, being content, and comfortable with its past reputation. A church that is not going forward is a dying church.
 - b. When it does not love.
 - c. When it does not care.
 - d. When it cares more about what man will say or think than what God thinks about it.
 - e. When it loses its vision to reach the whole world with the whole Bible.
 5. How sad to see Ichabod over the door of any of our Lord's churches.

III. VSS 2-3, COMPLAINT AND WARNING

- A. Vs 2, Be watchful and strengthen what is left.
1. The battle cry of the New Testament is watch. A good sentry is one who is awake. The sentries at the church at Sardis were asleep, and they needed to wake up. (Rm 13:11, "It is high time to awake out of sleep.") Sardis had fallen to enemy because of lax security.

- a. “The first step toward renewal in a dying church is honest awareness that something is wrong” (Wiersbe 38).
 - b. Too many churches are deaf to their own death rattles, to far gone to see the enemy coming.
 - 2. “Strengthen the things that remain.”
 - a. They needed to strengthen and guard what they had left.
 - b. What remained was ready to die and the candlestick was about to be removed (Rev 2:5).
 - c. This church was not right with God; it was dying; and its works were weak. The church was weak, but they were not to give up; they were to strengthen, to sure up what was left.
- B. Vs 3, There is one thing that we must never forget. There is one message that must be preached– the Gospel! Let’s remember it; let’s keep preaching it.
 - 1. They needed to go back to the Gospel.
 - 2. They needed to guard what had been given them (I Tim 6:20).
 - 3. “Hold fast”– don’t let go, don’t let anyone lead you astray.
 - 4. “Repent,” turn to God with a submissive heart.
 - 5. “Like a thief” points to imminent judgment (II Pet 3:10).
 - a. If there was no revival, God would destroy the Sardis church.
 - b. Every church must be diligent lest judgment overtake it.

IV. VSS 4, THE COMMENDATION TO A REMNANT

- A. In the church at Sardis, there were a few who would not compromise.
 - 1. It seems that Sardis had a number of professors but few possessors of eternal life.
 - 2. God has a remnant even in the dead Sardis church (Rm 1:55, “Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.”).
- B. “Which have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.”
 - 1. “Defiled” means “to soil, to stain, to pollute.”
 - 2. The remnant could come into God’s presence because they

had not defiled themselves (Isa 64:6; Jude 23).

- a. This is not imputed, but practical righteousness (Rev 19:8).
- b. The remnant had not dirtied their garments as others had in Sardis.

V. VSS 5-6, COUNSEL FOR SARDIS

- A. Vs 5, At the marriage supper the true church will be in white raiment (Rev 19:7-9).
 1. The book referred to here is the book of the living, a record of those who are alive (Psa 69:28).
 2. “Revelation 13:8 and 17:8 suggests that the names of the saved are written in the book from the foundation of the world– that is, before they had done anything good or bad. By God’s grace, they have been chosen in Christ before the beginning of time (Eph 1:4; see also Matt. 25:34)” (Wiersbe 39).
- B. Vs 6, The church at Sardis needed to heed the Lord’s message. The lost need salvation; the saved need to repent.

CONCLUSION: How do you think God sees your church today?