

## The Dead Church (Message #9)

Revelation 3: 1-6

Tonight we are looking at the 5<sup>th</sup> church in our study, the church at Sardis. Sardis was the capital city of Lydia, founded around 1,200 BC. It was well known for wealth and industry. The 1<sup>st</sup> gold and silver coins were minted there. It was famous for carpet, wool, and dyed cloth.

The city had been overtaken by foreign rulers at various times throughout its history. In John's day, Sardis was greatly diminished from the glory it once knew. They were proud of whom they had been, but little could be said about what now existed. A once vibrant city was dying from the inside out.

Prophetically Sardis represents the Reformation era, [AD 1517-1750](#). Great strides were made in reforming doctrine, but true revival was never achieved. We must consider the danger of becoming a Sardis. I like to think of the church as a lighthouse shining for those sailing the dark, troubled seas of life. Many churches once stood as a mighty beacon of truth.

Today the lighthouse remains, but there is no light, no help for troubled souls. They are of little value other than to remember the day when the light shown brightly. I don't want us to become an empty lighthouse, dead and unmanned, with no light. Let's consider: [The Dead Church](#).

**I. The Lord's Ability** (1) – [And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.](#) The church at Sardis, for all intents and purposes, may have been dead, but that didn't affect the sovereignty of Christ. We may not live as we should, but He's still God! Notice:

**A. His Position** – Here we see Jesus, once again, proclaiming His deity. He possesses the [7 Spirits of God](#). This is clearly a reference to the Holy Spirit in His fullness, the perfect, complete, and powerful Spirit. We can understand this better with [Is.11:2 – And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.](#)

- Jesus possesses the fullness of the Spirit. He reminds us that apart from Him, we can do nothing. We need His power on our lives and services. All the talent in the world will profit little without the touch of God.

**B. His Provision** – Jesus also holds the **7 stars**. Remember this refers to the messengers, the pastors of the churches. A God called man is held up by the Lord; he must allow God to direct his ministry.

- God has all the resources we need to be successful. We need to pray that God will raise up some great preachers in this dark day. But, if we are to be a vibrant, living church, one that reaches sinners, Christ must be at the helm providing what we need to be effective. It's not about preachers or programs, but the power of Christ!

**C. His Perception** – **I know thy works**. This is the fifth time we've heard this. Maybe we ought to pay attention! He is aware of all we do. He knows whether we are serving with our lives or simply with our lips.

- That challenges me to give Him my best everyday. A half-hearted effort doesn't fool or satisfy the Lord. He has given Himself; the best heaven had to offer. Surely we can give our best to Him.

## **I. The Lord's Ability (1)**

**II. The Church's Reality (1b-3)** – The church was situated within the crown jewel of Sardis. It is likely that in such a wealthy city, the place of worship would've been a sight to behold. We've all heard the saying, "Things are not always as they appear."

**A. Their Reputation (1b)** – **Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead**. By all appearances, the church at Sardis was alive and well. They likely had a strong presence in the city. There is no mention of the false doctrines that were referred to at Pergamos and Thyatira.

- The city, as well as the church, thought things were in order. They had a name for God, but they were dead! Physically they were diligent, but spiritually they were dead.
- I fear there are many churches, bearing the name of Christ, who are very active, but have no spiritual life. A dead church lives in the past, satisfied with things as they are. They are more concerned with comfort than conviction, with men's salaries instead of their souls. They desire to please men more than God. They aren't concerned with sound doctrine as long as they leave feeling good about themselves.

- We need to be on fire for God; a church that is concerned with a stirring of the Spirit, seeing souls saved, and sincerely living for Jesus. Pilgrim isn't dead, but we could stand to get our heart rate up a bit, amen?

**B. Their Responsibility** – Jesus wanted them to live up to their reputation. It was time for actions to catch up with appearances. I know folks who talk good religion with little or no activity. Notice their responsibilities:

**1. Revival (2)** – **Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.** It was time to wake from sleep and become aware of their need. They needed to focus on the Lord. Many times our minds are anything but God when we come to worship.

- There were a few things at Sardis that wasn't completely dead. It was time to rekindle the flame before it went entirely out.
- We need revival; America needs revival! We need that fire stirred within our souls. Jesus had considered their work and found it lacking. All their activity produced no fruit or praise for God.

**2. Remembrance (3a)** – **Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.** Jesus is literally saying - Remember where you were when I found you, the joy you had, the zeal for serving God. We can't live in the past; we'll never achieve the future, but we can let our memory stir our hearts to desire the joy and fulfillment we once had in Christ!

**3. Repentance** – Jesus wanted them to remember and **repent**. There is no doubt that the Christians in Sardis had experienced conviction. [Heb.12:6 – For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.](#)

- The Holy Spirit will convict sin in the heart of believers! It isn't a question of our awareness of sin, but what we do about it. Genuine repentance feels remorse and forsakes sin, turning away from it and unto God.
- Real repentance, for many, is a thing of the past. We'll never have revival if we aren't willing to repent. It doesn't have to involve some "great" sin. It can be as simple as a lack of desire, concern, or labor for God. Are you familiar with repentance?

**4. Resolve** – Jesus said **hold fast**. If they failed to watch, He would remove those things which remained. **If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.**

- We need resolve today! We need to determine that Pilgrim won't die on our watch. Wouldn't it be awful for Pilgrim to become a Sardis in our generation? We must determine to live for Jesus regardless of the pressures of life. We cannot get satisfied with things as they are. We will never achieve perfection down here, but there is nothing wrong with striving for it!

### **I. The Lord's Ability** (1)

### **II. The Church's Reality** (1b-3)

**III. The Remnant's Security** – You can rest assured, God knows those who belong to Him. He knows the difference between sheep and goats. He gives words of encouragement to the faithful. These words:

**A. Involved Their Faith** (4a) – **Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments.** The promises of God are given to those who overcome. There were some who hadn't defiled themselves with the world.

- We have to live among the world, but we don't have to become the world. There must be a difference. Our faith is the only way to overcome. **1 Jn.5:4 – this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.** His words also:

**B. Included Their Future** (4b-5) – **And they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.**

There were those in Sardis who remained faithful unto the Lord. They would be rewarded for their faithfulness.

- I'm glad this sinful world isn't all we have to look forward too, for the redeemed, heaven waits. We shall be robed in white, holy and pure, in our new glorified bodies. I'm glad to know that my name is recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life.

- Let me say, right quick, the phrase **"I will not blot out his name out of the book of life,"** does not refer to losing one's salvation. There are those who teach this doctrine, and this is a key verse for them.

- Apparently God has a book of all the living, saved and lost. In the context referring to unbelievers, notice [Ps.69:28 – Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous](#). It may be that those who die lost without accepting Christ are blotted out, or removed from the book of the living.
- If you are saved Jesus has promised [to confess you before the Father and His angels](#). That doesn't sound like losing your salvation, but rather a promise of being declared a part of the family of God. I have no doubt regarding my eternal security!

As I studied this text, I kept thinking of a mannequin. I have seen them in department stores looking almost life-like. The reality of it is; they are dead; they have no heart. I wonder how many churches across our land are made up of nicely dressed mannequins.

Most folks I know look good on the outside, but I can't see the heart. Are they sincere in their service for Jesus, or is all just an outward, empty shell? I don't want to become spiritually dead. I'm praying that God will ignite a fire within our souls that cannot be put out. Has God spoken to you about your relationship with Him? He can give you the spark that is needed to rekindle the flame!