

WHAT DOES JESUS WANT TO SAY TO OUR CHURCH?

Part Eight ~ The Church of Sardis—A Dead Church

Text: Revelation 3:1-6

INTRODUCTION:

1. The church at Sardis was located in what is known as eastern Turkey of today, about 50 miles inland from the Aegean Sea.
2. Sardis was located at the junction of five main roads on the commercial trade route of that day and was exceedingly pagan in worship.
3. Today the remains of an ancient temple to their chief goddess, Artemis, tell of the extreme sinfulness of their pagan worship. It was a "nature cult" that built upon the idea of death and rebirth. Alongside this pagan temple are the ruins of an early Christian church, showing us that Christianity had to be willing to face the most severe opposition in all ages.
4. Today only a small village remains where this once-great city stood. No Christian witness is there except the ruins of a dead church.

I. THE LORD GIVES HIS ASSESSMENT OF THE CHURCH AT SARDIS (VERSE 1)

- A. Much history and many great battles took place in the city of Sardis. The ruins of great pagan temples dating back to the 4th Century B.C. are there. However, the Lord's greatest interest there was His church.
- B. Notice the close association between the seven spirits of God (The fullness of the Holy Spirit) and the seven stars (Revelation 1:20 Pastors) of the churches.
 1. We desperately need Spirit-filled pastors in our pulpits today.
 2. Churches consider education, manners, personality – but the most important thing is for the Pastor to be filled with the Holy Spirit and to preach the Word of God! Amen?!
- C. Notice the marked change in the manner in which the Lord addresses this church.
 1. In the past, He had referred to any good thing about the church first.
 2. At Sardis, He begins with condemnation. Here evil had not been the exception, but the rule.
 3. There are no words of commendation to the believers at Sardis.
- D. "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead."
 1. This church had a good reputation among the city people.
 2. They had good reports, good facilities, plenty of people, but they were dead.
 3. The Lord looked beyond the reports, beyond the outward reputation. He looked to their spirituality. They were dead.
 - a. Many churches fall under this condemnation today.

- b. They are dead because of:
 - (1) The pulpit. The living Word of God isn't preached.
 - (2) The classroom. The Word of God isn't taught.
 - (3) The lack of vision – no souls are being won (Proverbs 29:18)
 - (4) The home life. The Word of God isn't truly believed and lived out loud.
- c. A corpse will not visit, support missions, read the Bible, pray, give, etc.
YOU CANNOT REVIVE A CORPSE!
- 4. A church is in danger of death when it begins to:
 - a. Worship past victories.
 - b. Be more concerned with form and ceremony than life.
 - c. Love organization and tradition more than Jesus Christ.
 - d. Be concerned more about material things than spiritual things.

II. THE LORD IS EVEN CONCERNED ABOUT DEAD CHURCHES (VERSE 2). HE COMMANDS:

A. "Be watchful".

- 1. Be alert lest the rest of your church dies – and you die.
- 2. Be watchful lest sudden judgment fall upon the church as a thief in the night.
- 3. Be watchful lest the Lord returns soon and finds you as a spiritual corpse instead of a living, serving, faithful Christian.

B. "And strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die".

- 1. Be watchful and strengthen weaker Christians.
- 2. Be watchful and strengthen dying Sunday Schools, prayer meetings, etc.
- 3. Save the remains. The remains can be set on fire – if not, bury them.
- 4. There was still hope because Jesus Christ was the Head of the church and He was able to bring new life.
 - a. All of the church's man-made programs can never bring life, any more than a circus can resurrect a corpse.
 - b. The life and power in a church comes from the Holy Spirit.
 - c. When the Holy Spirit is grieved or quenched, the church begins to lose life and power.
 - d. When sin is confessed and forsaken and church members get right with God and each other, then the Holy Spirit can infuse new life, Revival!

C. "For I have not found thy works perfect before the Lord".

- 1. The word "perfect" means mature, spiritual things.
- 2. This church was not serving as mature, full-grown Christians should serve.
 - a. Soul-winning – praying.
 - b. Bible study – preaching.
 - c. Many people want the wrong things from churches today. Many churches are in the wrong business today. The result is they have no power or life. They are dead.

III. EVEN DEAD CHURCHES HAVE A FEW GOOD CHRISTIANS IN THEM (VERSES 4-5)

A. "Thou hast a few names".

1. Too many churches are trying to do the work with just a few.
 - a. The great majority does not care – they are dead spiritually.
 - b. This is the condition of many in our churches today.
2. The great sin of the few was that they stayed in a dead church – "Even in Sardis". How many do you hear say, "I am staying in such and such a church to try to save it"? You will freeze to death – you will die with it.

B. "Even in Sardis" Some were saved in spite of the church of Sardis. Salvation is of the Lord. How many more could have been saved if the church was right with God?

C. The promise is to the faithful, those who have stood true to God and the Word.

1. "They shall walk with me in white for they are worthy."
2. White represents righteousness. Revelation 19:8 also refers to the white garment as depicting the righteousness of the saints. They lived for God here, separate from the world.

D. "I will not blot out his name out of the book of life".

1. This has caused many misunderstandings in religious circles. Some say that you can be lost after salvation.
2. Consider whose name is in the Book of Life.
 - a. Is it only those who are saved and at the time of their salvation, their name was entered into the Book?
 - b. Or is it all names of all who are born with those who are never saved blotted out?
 - c. I believe it is the latter. The names of the babies born and who die in infancy are in there, though they were never born again.
3. This simply means that the pretender, the one who professes Jesus Christ but does not possess Him, will not fool God. Your name will be blotted out unless you are saved.
4. The "overcoming" does not provide you with salvation, but it is a testimony of your new birth. The saved will go on to meet God through death or the Second Coming. Jesus Christ knows every one of His sheep and will identify them before God.
5. The Catholic Church has excommunicated untold numbers because they put their trust in Jesus as their Savior and not the church. Their names were blotted out of the church book. Jesus said their names would never be blotted out of His Book of Life.

V. HERE AGAIN IS CHRIST'S WARNING TO CHRISTIANS AND TO CHURCHES TO HEAR AND OBEY (VERSE 6)

A. Here is God warning us again. Listen to Him!

B. Are you spiritually dried up? Dying?

C. Are you a pretender, but lost?

D. Are you trying to keep alive the portion of the church that you fill?