



Empowering People to Change the World

The Church at Sardis: A Dead Church

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We are studying the book of Revelation

- No book of the Bible takes such a high view of God and specifically Jesus Christ.
- No book of the Bible takes such a high view of the Scriptures: out of 404 verses, 278 allude to the Old Testament.
- No book of the Bible so reveals the majesty and power of God the Father.
- No book of the Bible so describes heaven. The only place in the Bible that actually shows us what heaven looks like!
- No book of the Bible describes the end times in more detail.
- This book will describe the great tribulation, the rapture of the church, but preeminate is the description of our great and powerful Lord Jesus Christ in all of his glory and majesty!
- The Book of Revelation is a cosmic pageant—an elaborate, colorful series of visions that involve celestial beings, beasts, oceans, and the heavenly world.

We find the Outline to the book in Revelation 1:19:

Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.

- 1st, “what you have seen.” (chapter 1) This is a vision of Jesus Christ in His majesty and glory—the main subject of the entire book—Jesus Christ the glorious coming King.
- 2nd, “the things which are.” (chapters 2-3) The second division are the 7 churches, the 7 lampstands, led by the 7 angels—pastors, which is what we are looking at right now: local, translocal, and prophetic meaning.

- 3rd division of Revelation, and the most prominent (chapters 4-22) speak of the “the things which will take place after this.” The last days, the coming of Christ and the events leading up to his coming

Power Point showing the 7 churches

- We have studied the mail route of these churches, starting with:
 - Ephesus
 - Smyrna,
 - Pergamos,
 - And last week, Thyatira.

Revelation 3:1-6

“And to the angel of the church in Sardis write,

- These 7 churches represent every church problem.
- We note that the Lord is not too interested in how we worship or how we do children’s ministry or men’s ministry, but He is more concerned with deeper issues of the Heart and Soul of the church.
- Sardis was a wealthy city, though in some decline at this time. Known for:
 - Textile manufacturing.
 - Dye industry.
 - Beautiful jewelry.
- The city was saturated with idolatry, mystery cults, and secret religious societies.
- There is a clear shift in emphasis with the church at Sardis, with an unmixed message of rebuke and censor.

‘These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: “I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.

- Completeness of the Holy Spirit—a church must be filled with the Spirit in all she does.
 - Jesus is the fullness of the Spirit.

- The Holy Spirit gives the church life!
- Church growth only comes through the Spirit.
- Power within a church comes only from the Holy Spirit.
- Acts 2:47 - Praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.
- In Acts 13 - God called out Paul and Barnabas to go out in missions...it is the Holy Spirit that sends out missionaries and church plants.
- Ephesians 4 - God extends gifts to the church and equips the saints.
- “I know your works” nothing is missed in God’s gaze upon the church and the leadership of the church.
 - **2:18 ‘These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire,**
 - **2:23 all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts.**

“I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.

- Sardis evidently had a reputation for being an alive church, but from the perspective of the First and the Last, Jesus Christ, it was actually dead.
- The church of Sardis is dying a slow death of apathy!

Wilbur Smith, according to Billy Graham he was the greatest Bible scholar he ever met, “What do you think is the greatest danger in the church today in America?” Wilbur Smith said, “Dead orthodoxy. The church is so right, that it is dead right”

- Every position nailed down, every theology defined, but there is no life...no evangelism, no one getting saved, no one excited about the Lord.
- Instead of DOA (Dead on Arrival) it’s just DO, “Dead Orthodoxy.”
- So many fall into the “Paralysis of Analysis,” just over analyzing everything.

- We have analyzed everything to death and we forget that it is the Spirit that give life. It is the Spirit that changes lives.
- Would analysis have parted the Red Sea?
- Would analysis have pulled down the walls of Jericho?
- Would we fight a giant with a sling shot with analysis?
- Would Elijah have pulled fire down with analysis?

5 Characteristics of a Dead or Dying Church:

- 1. Worship the Past rather than Envision the Future.**
- 2. More Concerned with Form than Function.**
- 3. Loves the Mode of Systems rather than the Movement of the Spirit.**
- 4. More concerned with Material stuff than Ministry Transformation.**
- 5. Forget Who's church it is—ownership and leading is from Jesus Christ, not a committee, board, or pastor.**

Vs. 2

Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God.

- His rebuke is three fold:
 1. They are a church that exists in name only! They have reputation on the outside, but they are dead on the inside. They have no life, no growth, no one is getting saved.
 2. There are only a few things that remain and even those things are ready to die.
 3. All the good things you had have not been completed.
- Man, I don't want to be a "name only" Christian! I want to not just have a good reputation; I want to have genuine works for the kingdom of God.

- I want to live the Christian life with full conviction! I don't like to have to put myself in the church at Sardis, but there are things in my life that are not what I would hope them to be...
- Our Vision: Being Wholehearted Disciples!

Characteristics of an Alive Church/Alive Disciple:

- 1. Vision! Vision for one's life and ministry.**
- 2. Spirit-empowered. Led by and empowered with the Holy Spirit.**
- 3. Intimacy. Growing in intimacy with Jesus.**

- I want to grow and be increasingly full of the Holy Spirit in my life.
- Are there dead places in your life? Are there dark areas that you have not given to Christ? I find in my life that there are things in my life if I don't strengthen, they are waning and not being taken over by God.
- The Lord want us to be bring to completion the opportunities and ministry of God in my life...He is saying "don't wane...keep growing...keep giving the areas of your life to me."
- This church would never exist with analysis! Are we crazy to have a vision for planting 1000 churches? Yes...

Vs. 3

Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.

- Remember what you did before! Remember what you read before! It is not a game of discovery, but of remembering.
- This is not some heavenly chess match, where God is hiding the queen...No, remember what you already know to be true.

Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.

- Jesus is actually reference history that every Sardisian would have understood.

- Sardis was the convergence of five trade routes. Built on a mountain like a fortress. It's position made it seemingly unpenetrable, impregnable.
- Sardis had once been the ancient capital of the kingdom of Lydia, and of King Croesus. (560-546 BC)
 - Cyrus the Great in 549 surrounded the city and found it impossible to get in and offered a reward to any one who could get into the city. A helmet found over the wall. He watched the soldier walk on this secret trail. That night the soldiers penetrated and surprised the city, scaling the cliffs at night.
 - Antiochus in 218 did the same thing while the city was sleeping.
 - A phrase came in vogue because of the city's history, "Sardis was taken like a thief in the night."
- The city was destroyed in 17AD and was never the fortress that it had been. Historians tell us that the immorality took over the city. Jesus chooses this city to speak to us.
- Like a thief in the night, the very thing that happened at Sardis in 500 and 200 BC...They thought they were secure and they were not!
- Apathy is a real enemy in our lives.
- Apathy sets in and we lose the life...I struggle with that too. I know my routine, know my job...
- We can become lax and not passionately pursue God anymore.
- I must seek Him and hear His voice and grow with Him daily spending time in prayer and meditation.
- Apathy is not heresy or immorality...it is a more dignified death.
- It takes years to die this way.

Remember the passion you once had. We don't have to improve or invent, but remember how you received...the first love, the first joy, the first passion for Christ...you prayed about everything

- Where is the love? This is the message to this church.
- Christ is crying out for them to return.
- If you are just walking through the motions but there is no life and light, He calls you Home...bring the life to completion.
- Remember the excitement of walking with Christ and reading His Word.
- Ask God for revival! Call out to God for revival!

You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.

- Even in this system, it has the name of being “alive.”
- Think about the reformers and those that followed. Look at the things happening today in most of the mainline denominations: Would Luther worship in the Lutheran Church? Would Wesley be comfortable in the Methodist Church today? Let's be honest.
- There are people still alive in those systems...even in Sardis there are people with life.
- Sardis actually means “remnant”
- Believers are walking with Him in the Light...there is always a remnant.

5 He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.

6 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

- Very controversial passage: is Jesus saying that we can lose our salvation?

- But If you compare Psalms 139 that speaks “in your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me” (vs 16) with Psalms 69:28 that says the disobedient will have their names “blotted out of the book of the living” there is this book that will be opened and the names remaining will be saved

- Revelation 20:12 - And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. 13 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. 14 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.
- God is a great bookkeeper and these are the names of everyone who has ever lived. But those who have died and have not accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior, their names are blotted out.
- Our names will never be blotted out...you are secure.
- Is your name permanently written in heaven? Are you experiencing His life right now? Fully experiencing Him?
- Do you have life? Joy? Power in your life?
- For the unbelieving world He comes as a “thief.”
- He will confess you boldly!
- We will be flooded with grace.
- **We have to be willing to be blotted out of every other membership in order to have our name written in the Book of Life.**
- **You have to be willing to be blotted out of anything that is getting in the way of our names being in the Lamb’s Book of Life**
- Apathy is an enemy...come back to Christ...you have to decide.
- If you accept Christ as your Lord and Savior, your name will never be blotted out

- Daniel 12:1-4

"At that time Michael shall stand up,
The great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people;
And there shall be a time of trouble,
Such as never was since there was a nation,
Even to that time.
And at that time your people shall be delivered,
Every one who is found written in the book.
2 And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake,
Some to everlasting life,
Some to shame and everlasting contempt.
3 Those who are wise shall shine
Like the brightness of the firmament,
And those who turn many to righteousness
Like the stars forever and ever.
4 "But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end;
many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase."