



Part 6: Sardis-A Warning To The Dead Church Walking

Revelation 3:1-6

#1 - Jesus' Description, Revelation 3:1a

In each of these messages that Jesus has for His church, as He addresses each of them, He gives them a portrait of Himself as the giver of the message. In previous messages, Jesus has described Himself as:

- One who holds the pastors in His right hand and walks among the seven churches
- One who is the first and the last; who was dead—yet is alive again
- One who has a sharp, two-edged sword
- One who has eyes like fire and feet like burnished bronze

In this message to the believers at Sardis, Jesus describes Himself to them as the one possessing the seven Spirits and the seven stars. There is only one Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:4), but the number seven demonstrates fullness and completeness. The Holy Spirit gives life to the church, and life is exactly, as we will soon discover, what the people at Sardis needed.

Christ also controls the seven stars, the messengers of the churches (Rev. 1:20), referring to the pastors.

#2 - Jesus' Rebuke, Revelation 3:1b

To Jesus, they are like walking corpses—Dead Men Walking. To put it another way—the church at Sardis is on life-support.

In Sardis the question is the relationship between reputation and reality. The reputation of the church at Sardis was life, but the reality was that they were dead.

The city of Sardis was known for its manufacture of woolen garments, a fact that has bearing on Christ's message to the church. Sad to say, the city at that time was but a shadow of its former splendor; and the church, unfortunately, had become like the city—it was alive in name only.

The message to Sardis is a warning to all “great churches” that are living on past glory. Dr. Vance Havner, well known Southern Baptist Evangelist of the last century, frequently reminded us that spiritual ministries often go through four stages: a man, a movement, a machine, and then a monument. Sardis was at the “monument” stage, but there was still hope!

There was hope because Christ was the Head of the church and He was able to bring new life. He described Himself as the one possessing the seven Spirits, the Holy Spirit, as I mentioned earlier, the number seven demonstrates fullness and completeness. The Holy Spirit gives life to the church, and life is exactly what the people at Sardis needed.

#3 - Jesus' Hope, Revelation 3:2

Jesus is telling them, “wake up and smell the coffee!” They must see themselves as Jesus sees them.

I said that this verse gives us Jesus' Hope.

First, they must understand their true predicament.

Second, they must strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die.

Thirdly, they must understand they have not filled the standard expected by the risen Lord, “for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God.” They were falling far short of fulfilling their obligations as believers.

#4 - Jesus' Exhortation, Revelation 3:3

Jesus exhorted them to *remember* ... *obey* ... and *repent*. He warned them that if they did not heed this exhortation, He would come on them like a thief, that is, suddenly and unexpectedly.

Remember: The saints of Sardis to remember two things—that which they received and that which they heard. That which had been received would have to reflect the word of God, salvation, and all the manifestations of the grace of God. That which they had heard probably represents the message of redemption.

Obey: Be obedient to this heavenly vision. God expects His people to not only remember what He says, He also expects us to obey what He says. Knowing and understanding a warning does us little good unless we heed it!

Repent: God expected this church to do an about-face—to agree with Him about their condition and turn to Him.

#5 - Jesus' Promise, Revelation 3:4-6

While this church as a whole was dead or dying, Christ recognized a godly remnant in the Sardis church who had not soiled their clothes with sin. He promised that true believers will be dressed in white, symbolic of the righteousness of God, that their names will remain in the book of life, and that He will acknowledge them as His own before His Father and His angels.

While this passage may imply that a name could be erased from the book of life, actually it only gives a positive affirmation that their names will not be erased.