

# To the Dead Church

Today we continue the series “To the Church” as we look at the letter to the church in Sardis, otherwise known as the Dead Church.

You can look around today and possibly see churches that are dead, is there any hope for them? Has God given up on those churches or can they be revived, brought back to life??

## PRAY

### **Revelation 3:1-6 (NKJV)**

1 “And to the angel of the church in Sardis write,  
‘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. 2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. 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. 4 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. 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.”’

Sardis an important and wealthy city. It was the capital of Lydia and was located on a high point about 1,500 feet above the valley with one narrow, winding, steep road entering making it difficult to conquer. They had watchmen on the walls who could detect the enemy approaching from far away. Basically, it was the kind of town where a person could feel really secure and get a little too comfortable.

Sardis was however conquered twice in its history when the watchmen failed to detect the enemy sneaking up the cliffs and walls.

Let's see how Jesus describes Himself to begin the letter to the church in Sardis....

### **Revelation 3:1 (NKJV)**

1 “And to the angel of the church in Sardis write,  
‘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.

The seven Spirits of God.....this represents the Holy Spirit (which there is only one). We know there is only one Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit. The seven Spirits of God can be interpreted a few different ways but they all come up with the same result....the Holy Spirit.

This may come from Isaiah 11

**Isaiah 11:1-2 (NKJV)**

- 1 There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse,  
And a Branch shall grow out of his roots.
- 2 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**.

Many scholars believe that this is what is being referred to by the seven Spirits of God. They would call this the sevenfold Spirit of God, meaning the seven parts or characteristics of the Spirit.

Others believe it could be from Zechariah 4 where the seven lamps and pipes are talked about in regards to God's Spirit.

Then we have the significance of the number seven. If you remember from a few weeks back, the number seven is used in the bible, especially in the book of Revelation, when referring to perfection and completion. Like when we talked about the letters to seven churches, this means they are to the church, the whole complete church regardless of which church they were originally sent to.

So the seven Spirits of God represent the complete, perfect Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit. Again, no matter which way you slice it, Jesus is referring to the Holy Spirit.

So He has the Holy Spirit, and also the seven stars which were mentioned back in the letter to Ephesus. The seven stars are the seven "Messengers" of the churches referring to either angelic messengers or human messengers.

Why would Jesus start out with this kind of introduction.....well, this letter is to the "dead" church. He says "I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead."

Jesus is reminding them of who ministers in His church. He does! I have no power outside of Christ and neither do you. If we desire for people to be ministered to, He has to do it. By His Spirit, whether it's done directly by the Holy Spirit or through some kind of messenger, Jesus is the one who ministers.

You wanna know what kind of church Jesus isn't ministering in??? A dead one! This church was dead. They had a name that was alive....a good reputation, but they were dead....no longer living, deprived of life (lacking the necessities of life)....His Spirit!

**John 6:63 (NKJV)**

63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.

In His introduction, Jesus reminds the church of what they are missing out on because of their deadness....This tells us that the church was mostly populated with unsaved, unregenerate people who did not have the life of God in them! The result is a dead church! That is the rebuke for the church in Sardis and it's a rebuke for the church today! Church we need the Holy Spirit!

Let's think about a dead church for a moment....do you picture an old building with some broken windows, overgrown grass, boards across the front door? That's not the kind of church Jesus describes. He said this church had a good reputation! People thought this church was alive! It looked nice, it was well kept, the parking lot was full

The church in Sardis was doing some great deeds, they had a good reputation. A good reputation is not a bad thing to have. I want to have a good reputation, leaders in this church are required to have a good reputation. We should be known for having good character, loving people, living righteously.

Here's the issue with a reputation....a reputation can be wrong. Someone can make a good impression around others and be a bum at home. On the flip side, some have a bad reputation, some may be warranted, others may be from past mistakes they have made, or from gossip and slander and really they are doing pretty good, just made one bad decision....

The same holds true for a church....a church can have a good reputation, full parking lot, lots of attention, influential people, doing lots of stuff....but the leadership is at odds, hurting people are not getting healed.

Others may have a bad reputation maybe they did something that offended someone and gossip and slander started but if people would close their mouths and go see, the leaders are in unity pursuing Jesus, hurting people are getting healing, spiritual growth is taking place.

The good thing is that the Holy Spirit sees right to the heart of the individual, and the church.

We will not preach people pleasing messages from this pulpit. We will preach the truth. Included in that truth is Jesus loves you, He is good, He has a plan for your life, but also included is repentance, sin is not OK, there is a hell and Jesus is the only way to heaven....

There is something that is more important than our reputation.....our relationship with Jesus.

**Matthew 15:8 (NIV)**

8 "These people honor me with their lips,  
but their hearts are far from me.

**Matthew 15:11 (NIV)**

11 What goes into someone's mouth does not defile them, but what comes out of their mouth, that is what defiles them."

It really is true when people say "It's what is on the inside that counts" Does Jesus have your heart? If not, you are not alive, even if you appear to be....

**Revelation 3:2 (NKJV)**

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

What happened here is priorities getting out of line. He says their works were not perfect, this means not complete, they were missing something, they were not adequate. Why? The heart behind them was wrong.....

Perfect works are those that are the will of God. Are you doing what Jesus is calling you to do? Those are the works that will be found perfect before God.

God has placed gifts in each and every one of you. You have value and you have something to offer, but it's up to you to use those gifts to further the Kingdom of God.

Our mission here is Making disciples for God's glory and for His Kingdom....you have to have the Spirit of God in order to accomplish that....any deeds you do that are not spiritually alive and accomplishing the will of God are pointless.....dead!

How many of you have heard of the Judgement seat of Christ?

**2 Corinthians 5:10 (NKJV)**

10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

This is not eternal judgement (heaven/hell). This is where Jesus will evaluate believers' lives for the purpose of giving them eternal rewards. He will evaluate what we did for Him. (the good/bad that Paul is talking about is not moral good/evil) but did we do things of eternal value or not....

**Revelation 3:3 (NKJV)**

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.

How great is our God? He always gives us another chance to repent. If you have been wasting your time, just getting through life, maybe doing a few good things, the Lord says REPENT!

We need to WATCH, other translations say WAKE UP! The reminder to Sardis is a reminder that twice this impenetrable city was overtaken when the watchmen failed to stay alert! It doesn't matter how strong you are, if you let your guard down, the enemy will sneak up on you!

### **Ephesians 5:14 (NKJV)**

14 Therefore He says:  
"Awake, you who sleep,  
Arise from the dead,  
And Christ will give you light."

We need to wake up and see our surroundings. We need to use those giftings that God has given us to do His will. To do complete, perfect works.

Furthermore, Jesus said if we don't wake up "I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you."

This is NOT referring to His second coming, when He returns for His bride (the Church). He is talking about judgement one a dead, unrepentant church. Do you know the parable of the talents? (Matthew 25:14-30)

Short Summary - The master gave talents to 3 servants, 2 of them did something with them and were rewarded with more and one of them sat on their talent and it was taken away.

We see four instructions in Revelation 3:2-3

1. Strengthen What is Left - whatever things do have life, strengthen them, encourage them, build them up
2. Remember (Belief) - Remember what you have received and heard. Remember what the Lord has done. He is the source of Life.
3. Obey - be doers of the word not just hearers - James 1:22
4. Repent - turn away from sin that leads to death

### **Revelation 3:4 (NKJV)**

4 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 dead churches there may be a few who are faithful.... These didn't defile their garments meaning they still had godly character. They sought holiness and purity.

### **Revelation 3:5-6 (NKJV)**

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."

"He who overcomes..." What are they overcoming? Death and darkness! Remember this is speaking on a corporate level! There is hope for bodies. Unless you have that life inside of you, you cannot give it to anyone. You can't give what you don't have! Once you have it what are you to do with darkness?

### **Ephesians 5:8-13 (NKJV)**

8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), 10 finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. 11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. 12 For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. 13 But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light.

This is overcoming! If you are not impacting and changing your surroundings either you are not walking with enough light/life or you are in the wrong place.

Church we need to be alive! Not just in HERE but out THERE!

#### Live Churches vs. Dead Churches

- Live churches constantly change, dead churches resist and refuse change.
- Live churches love to try, dead churches feel they don't have to.
- Live churches have youth that are noisy and can't be still, dead churches are very quiet.
- Live churches have people problems, dead churches float with the current.
- Live churches need money and take many special offerings, dead churches focus on their savings.
- Live churches are never satisfied and dream of improvement, dead churches tell it like it used to be.
- Live churches move in faith, dead churches have to see it first.
- Live churches are filled with givers and doers, dead churches have tippers and dippers.
- Live churches try and try again, dead churches say we never did it that way before.
- Live churches reach out to sinners and backsliders with personal evangelization, dead churches are paralyzed and fossilized.
- Live churches are characterized by a loving fellowship, but dead churches manifest a bickering spirit.
- Live churches are better, dead churches are BITTER.
- Live churches are lighthouses in their community, dead churches are night light bulbs

#### CALL WORSHIP TEAM

What kind of church would my church be, if every member were just like me? People the church needs LIFE! God's people need LIFE!

I tell you today....if you are dead, Christ can give you life!

“In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.” (John 1:4) Jesus also said “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.” (John 6:63) and “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” (John 14:6) and “I am the bread of life.” (John 6:48)

We pray for revival, revival brings life back, if you need this in your life Jesus can do it!

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!