



The Church of “Sardis”

“THE DEAD CHURCH”

June 24, 2019

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.”

The city of Sardis was built around B.C. 500 and was located on a narrow plateau fifteen hundred feet above sea level, about thirty-five miles southeast of Thyatira. Because the city was built in a mountainous region it was a natural citadel. It was the capital of the Lydian Empire and was still an important city during the Roman Empire. Sardis had become famous for their abilities in arts and crafts. They made lavish use of the local brightly colored and semi-precious stones such as fire opal and banded agate.

In the middle of **Revelations 3:1** we find the phrase, I know your deeds. This indicates two things; one is that Sardis was an active church. They were doing things, having programs, and reaching out to the surrounding community. This was a church “on the go,” a lively church, a flourishing church. It was a church with a good reputation. It was a church that was in good standing with the community. Many churches today don't even have any deeds. They are not doing anything for God. People show up for Sunday morning services and the church does nothing for the rest of the week. Sound familiar?

The second thing that the phrase I know your deeds indicates is that God is watching. This is something that we hardly ever think about. God watches and knows our deeds. He doesn't only know what we do, He knows why we do. He knows us better than we even know ourselves. We should be encouraged by this because even when it seems like no one notices the things we do, God knows. The flip side of this coin is that when we are doing deeds and works that we do not want anyone to know about, God knows. Verse one mentions a name.

What exactly is a name? A name carries with it both reputation and character. A name is what other people commonly think and say about you (or the church in Sardis in this case). The church in Sardis has good reputation, a name, that they are alive and active. But **you** are dead. The church had a name, and a reputation for being alive; but that name and reputation were with the world. Their name and reputation did not come from God. They were so busy doing things and trying to entertain and please the world that they forgot what the church is all about. They had stopped doing their works and deeds for God. They were too busy trying to convince each other that they were “Spiritual” to notice that they were dead. All the outward manifestations of the Spirit meant nothing. All the works and deeds meant nothing. All the church activity was worthless. Why? It is because the church was really dead. The church is going through the motions, but they are not measuring up to God's standard of Holiness.

Jesus quickly and clearly condemns the lifeless state of the Sardian church: “I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead” (**Revelation 3:2**). This church may have had a good reputation, but they were spiritually lifeless. In other words, the church was filled with unsaved people going through the motions of religion. There were many tares among the wheat (**Matthew 13:24-30**).

Jesus then calls them to repent of their sin: “Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God. Remember, therefore, what you received and heard; obey it, and repent” (**Revelation 3:2-3a**). To “wake up” means to start paying attention to their need of salvation, to stop being careless about their heart's condition before God.

Jesus notes the judgment that would take place if they did not repent: “If you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you” (**Revelation 3:3b**). A dead church, and one unrepentant in its deadness, will be disciplined by Jesus Himself. After the warning, Jesus encourages those in Sardis who had remained faithful: “Yet you have still a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy” (**Revelation 3:4**). The one who “overcomes” is anyone who is born again (**1 John 5:4**). The overcomer will receive a white garment (a token of righteousness), he will never have his name removed from the book of life (a promise of eternal security), and he will be confessed by Jesus in heaven

SCRIPTURE READING: 2 PETER 1:21

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: When God delays, He always delays for a greater purpose.