

THE DEAD CHURCH Revelation 3:1-6

I. Christ is characterized by His knowledge and care (1a).

- *Sardis*-see video.
- *has the seven Spirits of God*-This phrase is drawn from the vision of Jesus in 1:12-17. This phrase may refer to some Old Testament passages.
Isaiah 11:2: 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.

Zechariah 4:2: And he said to me, "What do you see?" So I said, "I am looking, and there is a lampstand of solid gold with a bowl on top of it, and on the stand seven lamps with seven pipes to the seven lamps.

- *I know your works*-Christ knew their deeds. The all seeing eye of Christ was gazing upon the church at Sardis.

II. Christ confronts those who have a reputation but are dead (1b).

The Lord gave less praise to this church than to any of the churches except Laodicea, which received none.

- *that you have a name that you are alive*-They looked good on the outside. They had the name "church."
- *but you are dead*-But they were dead on the inside. Precisely what John meant in speaking of the church as dead is difficult to interpret.

Dr. Vance Havner has 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!

Grant Osborne: The contrasting metaphors are "life" and "death" which represented moral and spiritual vitality morbidity.

III. Christ corrects those who are dying but not yet dead (2-3).

A. Command 1: Be alert.

- *Be watchful*-IMPERATIVE mood in the Greek. Wake up and get to it! The first of five imperatives found in verses 2 and 3. Jesus commands His church to keep watching!

B. Command 2: Strengthen what remains.

- *strengthen the things which remain*-This is also an IMPERATIVE. They were to act now and continue to act to preserve what remained of their dying faith. Apparently there was a spark of life in the church or a faithful remnant of people.
- *that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God*-"Not found" is a PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE. They may have looked spiritual, but they were religious people that looked good on the

outside but were dead on the inside. The term “completed” is a PERFECT tense meaning “mature, perfect, equipped for the assigned task.” The perfect indicates the verb has occurred with on-going results. Here it indicates a settled condition. They had not allowed God to complete what faith had started. There was an on-going absence of the completion of good works.

- C. Command 3: Remember what you have received and heard.**
- *Remember therefore how you have received and heard*-IMPERATIVE. This relates to the gospel which they heard and continued to receive. This relates to salvation, the word of God and everything that comes with the grace of God. “Received” is the perfect tense indicating what they had received should be producing on-going results and actions in their lives. Repentance begins with remembering what God has done for us!
- D. Command 4: Keep it.**
- *hold fast*-“Keep” in some translation. They were to hold onto all the blessings that they had been given in Christ. They were to “keep” (guard and observe) teachings about the gospel.
- E. Command 5: Repent.**
- *repent*-an IMPERATIVE which implies a complete repentance.
 - *Therefore if you do not watch*-This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE like 2:22. The action is potential, contingent on their response to Jesus’ commands, but not assured.
 - *I will come upon you as a thief*-A visit from Christ is usually something to look forward to, but not in this instance. It was a stern warning from Christ. Failure to heed these warnings would result in Jesus Christ sending severe and sudden discipline on the believers that would surprise them.
- IV. Christ commends those who are holy and worthy of His praise (4).**
- *You have a few names even in Sardis*-There was a faithful few that were still true to Jesus.
 - *who have not defiled their garments*-“White garments,” symbolic of one’s works (19:8), are pure and free of defilement. In the ancient world, white robes also connoted festivity and victory. Sardis was a city known for woolen goods and dyed stuffs. “Defile” can mean “soiled, stain, smear or pollute.”
 - *shall walk with Me in white*-White clothing is used as a symbol of purity or victory in vv. 4, 5, 18; 6:11; 7:9, 13–14; 19:14. Only the Christians who were faithful to Jesus Christ could enjoy His intimate fellowship.
 - *for they are worthy*-Worthy only because of the finished work of Christ (Revelation 5:9).

V. **Christ confesses those who have His righteousness and are written in the Book of Life (5-6).**

- *I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life*-This is a strong DOUBLE NEGATIVE. This is a promise NOT a threat. In Athens Greece the name of a condemned criminal was deleted from the town's register prior to the execution of that individual. Jews who trusted Christ oftentimes had their names blotted out of the membership roll of the synagogue. The promise here is that whatever had happened in the past, if the people of the church of Sardis would repent their names would not be wiped out of the Book of Life. Psalm 69:28: Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, And not be written with the righteous.
- *but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels*-Jesus promises He would affirm the Christians of Sardis and that they belonged to Him. Matthew 10:32-33: Therefore **whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father** who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.