

Church of the Living Dead! (Revelation 3:1-6)

We come to the fifth Church described in the book of Revelation--the Church at Sardis. In Biblical numbers five is the number of grace, and did they need it! This is a Church with criticism. Sardis (the meaning of its name is uncertain although some have supposed "remnant" also notice Revelation 4:3 "sardine" a derivative of Sardis which was a stone flesh in color) was located about 40-50 miles south of Thyatira, and north of Philadelphia. The city was in Asia Minor (modern day Turkey its name is now "Sart") it was a Roman province in the first century.

It was an important city because it was located on commercial trade routes and was a wealthy city. The city was known for its arts and crafts, cults, jewelry making, and was the first center to mint gold and silver coinage. The citizens took up with mystery cults, and it is possible that the Christian community became imbued with the same spirit. The city experienced a great earthquake in A.D.17 which destroyed it both physically and financially. A promise of being "purified" and they shall walk with me in white from Jesus was given to them.

3:1 And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.

You may reference the study The Second Jezebel to refresh yourself on the angel of the church phrase. The things that are spoken are done so by he that hath the seven Spirits of God. The seven Spirits of God are symbolic of the Holy Spirit--his completeness. He says this to a dead or Spiritless Church. How about your Church? Is it dead? Do you have a name and street address, but no Spirit? Who cares if you have a building that costs Millions, seats thousands, has the best hymnals, or a great speaking pastor, but no Spirit of God? He is the one that also has the seven stars--pastors, leaders. He holds them in His hands.

I know thy works, we've really gone over that! Jesus, again to every Church, says this. We cannot suppose that we will hide anything from Him. That thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. This is the main problem with this Church. Is it with yours? He told them that they livest--they are alive and breathing they have the right language, works, and carry the name "Christian"--Jesus Christ. However, in contrast they are dead--spiritually dead, destitute of a life that recognizes and is devoted to God, because it is given up to trespasses and sins, inactive, inoperative.

This is how one can live and also be dead. This is the state of many in the Church today—called by a name, but dead to the life of Christ! Playing Church on Sunday but the rest of the week is given to other things. Here is a simple question, how much time do you spend with God and His Word, and how much of your time is occupied by other things? A good Biblical example of being alive, but dead spiritually is found in Luke.

For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry... It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found. (Luke 15:24,32)

3:2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.

Be watchful, gregoreuo (pronounced gray-gor-yoo'-o) be vigilant, give strict attention to, be active. This being watchful is a command! And strengthen, to establish, make firm. What? the things which remain, that are ready to die, what little they did have that was running out Jesus says build on that and make it firm. In other words go back to what you have and know, and start from there strengthening that! why do they need to do this? For [because] I have not found thy works perfect before God. Many would try and say, "Jesus does not mean perfect in the sense that we know it here" what if He did? What if he expected us to be perfect? (see Matthew 5:48). Anything less than 100% for Jesus is less than perfect.

3:3 Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

He is telling them to recall how they heard the gospel and received the gospel. He tells them to hold fast or be strong and repent change your mind. Yes, Jesus tells the Churches to repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, if they don't watch He says He will come on thee as a thief. First note He says come on not "come to," but "on." Remember Jesus said in Matthew 21:44.

And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

Coming like a thief is to come "unaware" without warning! The city sits in ruins today, and in the description of a thief He says they will not know what hour I will come upon thee.

3:4 Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.

This verse describes the condition of the remnant group in Sardis. They have one, not defiled their garments—they have remained pure and free from the pollution's of the city, and the cult therein. The promise they receive they shall walk with me in white—they will be clothed in the righteousness of Christ with a purified glorified body. Why? for they are worthy. Let this be said of you. Let your walk declare uncompromise, faithfulness, righteousness, and holiness.

3:5 He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

The closing promise is He that overcomes, the same shall be clothed in white raiment. If we are true believers, elect, predestinated, and called by God we will overcome—get the victory! As a matter of fact, John says we have already overcome:

Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world (1 John 4:4).

We can see more detail of the white raiment in Revelation 6:11; 7:14; 19:8. He goes on to say, I will not blot out his name out of the book of life.

Two things here. One, this is describing a record book kept in Sardis, we are told, that contained the names of many distinguished men. If one of these men committed an offense the punishment would be having their names erased from the record book. Those in Sardis knew about this book, and would have no doubt understood what Jesus was saying.

Two, this statement is in the positive not the negative—he says I will not blot out his name. This book is simply not a record book but the book of life! The second condition is Jesus will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. He will announce your name to all present in heaven! He closes with words He uses for all the other Churches He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Remember this is not the physical ear, but the spiritual one. Do you have those spiritual ears? Do you hear Him speaking to you today? I pray you do.

Amen