

Sardis: The Lifeless Church Revelation 3:1-6

Intro: We are in this section of the book of Revelation where Jesus wrote letters via John to seven churches in Asia Minor

A)Of the Seven Churches - 5 had significant problems - that Jesus needed to address.

B)How many of you know that Churches have problems?

**C)These were some announcements in some real Church Bulletins – that had a word misspelled,
1)comma left out –changed the message slightly**

Don't let worry kill you let the Church help!

Thursday Night Potluck – Prayer & Medication to follow. – (Instead of meditation

The choir will meet at the Larsen house this Wednesday pm for fun and sinning.

Weight Watchers will meet at 7 p.m. at the First Presbyterian Church.

Please use large double door at the side entrance.

Bertha Belch A Missionary from Africa is speaking at Calvary Memorial Church in Racine tonight. So Come and hear Bertha Belch all the way from Africa".

Our church youth basketball team is back in action Wednesday at 8 pm in the recreation hall. Come out and watch us kill Christ the King.

The rose on the Pulpit this morning is to announce the Birth of David Allen Beltzer – the sin of Pastor and Mrs. Beltzer

Now those are innocent misprints – but they point out a fundamental truth – namely we all have Bloopers / We all have Faults & Problems

A)Five of the seven churches in the book of Revelation had problems - they had sin issues - that needed to be dealt with

B)And that is why I so appreciate this portion of Scripture –

C)Because we see Jesus – caring for these flawed, messed up people – who are a part of His body.

He comes to them - He writes to them.

A)We have noted that of the 5 problem churches in the book of Revelation two of them had a Compromise problem

B)Pergamos - we looked at this past Wednesday night had compromised Doctrinally -

1)They had let into the church -false teaching that resulted in immoral behavior

C)And this Wednesday night we will see how the Church in Thyatira - compromised by tolerating sin

But the other 3 problem churches had a heart problem

A)Meaning at the root of their issues was a problem of the heart. - Their hearts were not in the right place.

B)There is no blatant immorality issue or doctrinal issue going on

C)In fact from an outward appearance they looked good - they looked normal - it was business as usual

D)But inside their hearts were far from God

We looked at the first church with a heart problem last Sunday -

A)Ephesus - the Loveless church - Left first love

B)Today we will look at the 2nd church with a heart problem - Sardis - the Lifeless church

1)Next Sunday we will finish by looking at - the Church of Laodicea - the Lukewarm church

C)Today Sardis - the Lifeless Church

And to the angel (Angel = Messenger - Pastor) 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." '

Let's start by considering the city that this church was in -

A) Because it Gives us some context and backdrop as to what the immediate culture was like where the church was

B) Sardis was - The wealthiest city in that province during that time.

C) City of industry: Coin minting, - the earliest gold and silver coins were minted in the city of Sardis

1) It was a city that was known for its carpet and wool industry

D) Military center

E) Home of the temple to Artemis

1) City that was steeped in Idolatry to pagan gods

Sardis was a Unique city in the sense that it was located a top this plateau that stood 1500 feet above the main roads

A) The city had jagged cliffs on every side but one - This location made the city an impregnable fortress

B) And it was for many generations- It survived the Egyptian, Assyrian and Babylonian empires

C) It stood as a Sovereign and wealthy city

Sardis was so confident that the city could never be over taken that they didn't even have watchmen on the walls.

A) But in 547 B.C. Sardis was conquered by Cyrus and the Persian invaders - because they weren't watching -

B) They were caught off guards as the invaders seized the city from it one weak position the southside

C) They made the same mistake again 400 years later when the city was conquered again by Alexander the Great.

1) Once again they had no guards posted on the walls.

D) Historians have said - that children could have defended the city that night - but no one was watching

1) Because they weren't expecting an attack to come

By the time Jesus is dictating this letter to John, the city was a shell of its once great glory

A) And that serves as a parallel of what was happening in the church as well

B) At this time in church history, the church of Sardis was a shell of what it had once been -

1) it was a church that really resting on past accomplishments

C) The sinners in Sardis saw the church as a respectable group of people who were neither dangerous, nor desirable

1) They just were there.

D) But Jesus has a heart for this church - he wants to see them restored - vibrant - revived.

Outline once again

- **Revelation:** How Jesus reveals himself to the church
- **Recognition:** What they were doing right
- **Rebuke:** Jesus points out their problem
- **Remedy:** What they need to do to get back on track
- **Ramification:** What will happen if they don't listen to Jesus, and what will happen if they do.

The Revelation of Jesus: V.1

Jesus reveals Himself in two ways, as the One who has...

#1 - The Seven Spirits of God

#2 - The Seven Stars

We have noted in past studies that the Seven stars - represent the pastors of these seven churches

A)We noted in our study in Ch 1 that the 7 spirits of God - is not saying there are seven Holy Spirits

B)But rather a reference to seven attributes of the Holy Spirit that Isaiah mentions in Isaiah 11

“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.” – Isaiah 11:2

This church was in need of a fresh filling of the Holy Spirit

A)In the early life of a church - they are usually really dependent upon the Holy Spirit -

B)Much Prayer - desperate - But sometimes after they have a measure of success -

1)there is a danger of letting the machine of ministry take over

C)More dependent on our Systems than the Holy Spirit - more dependent on programs than prayer.

I think -There is something in most of us - where we are drawn to systems and formulas - organization

A)We want things to function well - but the danger is when -

B)We CAN start to depend on those things rather than God.

C)we can get so much into the method of ministry – that we stop seeking the Lord for His direction 1)and His empowerment to do the ministry

D)We start going through the motions - and there is a death that is taking place.

1)The Life of the Holy Spirit is no longer there.

E)AW Tozer once said - If you removed the Holy Spirit from the church today

1)75% of the church would not even know He was missing

F)Doing it on their own for so long - Dead or dying and they don't even know it!

1)That was the church of Sardis

So Jesus is Revealing Himself as the one who still is for them - they are in his hands -

A)And as the one who is ready to infuse them afresh with the Holy Spirit

B)To put it in our modern day vernacular - Jesus is saying - I am the one who can bring Revival to you.

C)Revival is not something that we plan - it is something that God does.

1)Revival is not an evening and an event where we have an experience with God

Revival is something that God births in our heart - lasting - changes us - changes those around us

A)The Church of Sardis needed a revival

B)We can't plan a Revival - but we can prepare are hearts to be revived by God

1)It starts with recognizing the need

C)That is what Jesus wants Sardis to realize - their need of Revival.

But before Jesus addresses their problem he begins as always with a word of Recognition - Sort of

A)Now here is what is interesting about the Church of Sardis and Laodicea - neither of them really get a commendation

B)Nothing is said about - their labor or standing against false doctrine like Ephesus

C)Nothing is said about their Endurance and richness in Jesus like Smyrna.

1)Nothing is mentioned about standing strong against the enemy and holding fast like Pergamos

D)Nothing is said about their love, service, faith - like Thyatira

Jesus says to Sardis:

“I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.

Name would be better translated here - You have a reputation that you are alive.

A)This is all I can say about you right now: You have a good reputation

B) Having a good reputation is a good thing:

1) We are told in Proverbs 22:1 - "A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches,"

**"A good name is better than precious ointment,"
Ecclesiastes 7:1**

C) A good Reputation is a good thing, unless it is not marked by a present reality.

That was the case in Sardis -

A) Jesus said you have a reputation for being alive but it was a false reputation!

**B) But the Recognition is followed by a Rebuke:
Jesus said in reality you are DEAD!**

1) False Reputation -

**C) Sardis Has been called: "
*"The church with a Reputation, but needing Resuscitation!"***

The First time I ever spoke in Europe was in a great big Cathedral in Yugoslavia

A) Big and Beautiful - but it was empty - there were like 10 people there who were all in their 90's

B) There might have been a day - when that church was alive - but no more

C) All over the world there are churches like that - big beautiful buildings - No life - just a shell

1) Those dead churches are easy to spot

D) Everyone knows those churches are dead or dying.

Sardis was different - Sardis had a reputation for being alive.

A) I picture a church that has a great facility - there are still people going there

B) At one time they had impacted their community in a big way.

C) From the outside - it still looks alive - the IG/FB pages are still happening with great pictures -

1) It looks alive - it looks happening - But it is dead.

D) You could say... "Everyone thought the church of Sardis was wonderful - but the Jesus."

A dead church is dead because the individuals are dead!

A) There are lots of dead individuals that love being dead together.

B) They're very comfortable in their deadness and they kind of feed off each other's death.

C) There was a little town where a pastor was summoned to take over a church that was sort of known for its decay.

He came and tried everything to bring this church back to life - he preached his heart out for months to no avail.

So one Sunday he stood up before this lethargic group of people and he said, '**This church is dead!** And today at **2:00pm** we will have a **FUNERAL SERVICE for it.**' You are all invited.

Not only did the people in the church that were left attend, news got around and almost this whole little town assembled at the church to see this funeral service.

The minister stood up behind the pulpit and said, 'We're here today to pay our last respects to the church that once stood here.'

And there was even a casket up front. And at the end of his little message and music, he said, 'I'd like you all to come forward and pay your respects to the dead.'

They came forward and this clever pastor had placed a mirror in the casket.

A) So everyone as they came forward saw himself or herself in the casket.

B) Now I don't know if that woke anyone up - but brilliant and pointed idea

**Why was Sardis dead? - How did Sardis die?
3 reasons**

A) The first reason is they relied on their past successes.

B) Notice Jesus says, 'I know your works.' He alludes to their past accomplishments,

1) Those things that gave them the name or the reputation that they were alive.

C) A sure sign of death is when a church worships its past, its history, its traditions.

D) It happens when they are not open to new methods - they live in the mentality -

1) We have always done it this way.

2) **If it ate broke don't fix it - Don't change things. -**

E) I hate that mentality -

The goal and focus of Ministry doesn't change -

A) Pointing people to Jesus - serving Jesus - helping people find identity in Jesus - sharing Jesus

B) That goal never changes - but the Methods can change constantly

1) If there is a better way to accomplish the goal - all for it

C) Dead Christians and churches love the status quo.

1) Dead Christians and churches live in the past - love to say We remember back when.

D) If there is no present reality to your walk with Jesus - you are in trouble

1) **If you are always talking about what you were doing 10yrs ago - 20 yrs ago - 2 yrs ago**

E) Nothing presently: There is a problem.

So First they relied on their past successes

A) 2nd this church in Sardis lived life on the surface.

B) Surface Christianity is what they loved. - This church was content with its reputation.

1) **That is what mattered to them.**

C) Be careful if you're the kind of person who is always worried and concerned about what other people think about you.

D) That is a dangerous place to live.

1) **Especially if you are more concerned with what people think than what God thinks**

Notice what Jesus says in V.4 see a hint about this condition. 'You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments.'

A) So If there were a few people who didn't defile their garments,

B) that's in contrast to a whole bunch in the church of Sardis who did defile their garments.

C) In other words, this church at Sardis had a great exterior,

1) **They had a great reputation, but there was a filth underneath.**

Jesus addressed the religious leaders of his day in that way - ²⁷ "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which appear beautiful on the outside, but inside are full of the bones of the dead. Matthew 23:27

1st they relied on their past successes

2nd this church in Sardis lived life on the surface.

A) 3rd thing in this spiritual autopsy is they were satisfied with aimless activity.

B) Notice Jesus says, 'I have not found your works perfect before God.

1) **You have works, but they're not perfect or literally, complete.**

C) In other words, they're works but they're empty--there's no life in them. It's aimless, lifeless activity.

1) **Dead routines.**

D) Notice it says 'before God.' I haven't found your works complete before God.

Now before men they were great. They had the reputation. Men thought,

A) What an awesome, lively, great, vibrant church.

B) You're so lucky to live in Sardis to go to that place.'

C) But before God, the works themselves had only a shell, but no life within them.

D) Do you remember what God told the prophet Samuel when he came to find a king for Israel?

1) **And he went to Jesse's house and he saw all of these boys.**

E)One was real handsome and tall and he thought, 'That guy is king material.'

F)And God said to him, 'The Lord does not look at the things that man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance but the Lord looks at the heart.'

So the church of Sardis had many irons in the fire but none of them were hot. It was aimless activity.
A)What was going on there was not authentic!

B)I once spoke at a church up in OC - that was struggling with being authentic -

**1)Website Staff page - looked like 20 people on staff
Anyone who did anything as a Volunteer staff**

C)They had one of the best Instagram pages I had every seen - everything looked perfect -polished
1)Looked alive

D)Went to speak there- Using another churches facility - 800 seats in there -
1)but there was only 80 people in attendance

Worship was two people - a guy on Guitar and a girl singer.

A)But they played to a track like there was a full band

B)Lights and smoke machines - they were trying so hard to portray what they wanted to be. -
1)Not authentic

C)I tell church planters all the time - be authentic - people will see through the façade.

D)Sardis might have had everyone else fooled but Jesus saw through the façade

Jesus clearly saw the Problem - He addressed the Problem and he had a Remedy for the Problem
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.

Jesus commands them to do three things

#1 Be watchful

A)You remember the history of this city, right?

B)The downfall of the city of Sardis was its attitude of complacency and lethargy.

C)They grew overly confident in their defenses and started neglecting their weak points.

1)They left themselves open to attack because they were not being watchful

We who are followers of Jesus -who are living in this world that is getting darker by the day - can make the same mistake.

A)We have Many exhortations in the Bible to be watchful

**Be watchful in spiritual warfare - 1 Peter 5:8,
1 Corinthians 6:13, Ephesians 6:10-15**

B)Always being aware that we are in a spiritual battle. - We need to be on guard -

C)Be Watchful for the coming of Jesus - Matthew 24:42-44, Mark 13:33, Luke 12:40

1)Aware that we are living in the last days - Signs of the times

D)The world will become more godless - more anti-Christ - in the last days

**Be watchful in prayer: Colossians 4:2,
praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints ~
Ephesians 6:18**

**Be watchful against temptation: Luke 21:34,
Matthew 26:41**

A)Know the schemes of the devil - be on alert - know the areas where you are the most vulnerable

B)Here is the problem many people have -

1)they think the areas where they are the most vulnerable are where weak.

C)But have you ever heard the phrase - a strength can be a double weakness? You know why?

D)It is in the areas where we are strong - that we think we are indefensible - we drop our guard

1)The areas where we are strong are the areas we need to be watchful in the most!

E) So #1 Be Watchful

#2 Be Strong

strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die

A) This means they weren't totally dead yet -

B) And in order to avoid totally dying - they needed to strengthen the things that remained

Strengthen what remained.

A) What remained - They had Jesus - back to seeking him with all their hearts

B) They had the word - get back to digging in - hearing the word

C) They had opportunities to Serve Jesus -

1) Get back to loving Jesus and serving Jesus making Jesus known their #1 passion

D) New steps of faith = opportunities for new dependency.

#3 Hold Fast Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent.

A) Remember - not what you have received but HOW

B) Sardis needed to get back to basics -

1) they needed to get back to that place of living life dependent on the Holy Spirit

C) Hold fast to that dependency

It is pretty easy for me to stay dependent on the Holy Spirit in Ministry.

A) I feel so inadequate - for the calling

B) I always feel so many needs and not enough time to meet them

C) Every week I am begging Jesus to pour life into the message or it is just going to be words

1) Pretty easy for me to stay dependent on the Holy Spirit in ministry

But you know where I can be less dependent on the Holy Spirit? My marriage

A) Denise and I have been married for 38 yrs -

B) We are comfortable - know each other - most of the time - easy

C) But then there is a moment like Friday when something happens -

1) we snap at each other - suddenly - tension

D) Jesus help me - I don't understand this woman.

Jesus says to Sardis - Similar to Ephesus - Remember HOW you started

A) Realize you are not there now -

B) Repent - Quit relying on yourselves and start relying on the Holy Spirit again

C) A Word for some of you today.

Finally the Ramifications: 1st the Negative:

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.

What does this mean? Could mean he is going to come to them at an unexpected time - in Judgment

A) Judgment begins with the House of God!

B) Others believe that it could be a reference to the Rapture:

C) The Bible talks the rapture - Jesus coming like a thief in the night

1) Unexpected time - Catches the world off guard

The church shouldn't be caught off guard - because we are to be waiting and watching

A) If you are not waiting and watching for the rapture - does that mean you will be left behind?

B) I don't think so - but you might be really embarrassed

1) if you are doing something you shouldn't be doing when the rapture comes

C) Point Jesus is making is if they didn't Receive this wake up CALL - they were not going to be ready

Positive: 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.” ’

Note three things here:

A)#1 Those who are being watchful - Jesus says - You shall walk with me

B)Experience intimacy with Him restored

C)Life is seen as walking together - hand in hand -

1)Denise - Hello - We are together!

D)Man on a mission - Jesus says walk with me

#2 Those who heed the words of Jesus will experience the purity of their relationship restored -

A)Walk in white

B)Sign of purity and Victory -. 5 He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments,

C)#3 They would have an assurance of their heavenly citizenship.

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.

A)Note this is meant to be a word of assurance - you will know in your hearts that - your name is written in heaven

B)Jesus wants us to be assured of our salvation - confident in our salvation -

1)Know you are going to heaven

C)Not always wondering -

But what is meant by that Phrase: I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life;

A)Does this mean that someone can lose their salvation?

B)Does this mean that Jesus doesn't use permanent ink when he writes

1)Giant Eraser in heaven

C)Rob is being an idiot today - Rob is in sin today - Erase - No

We need to first see the context here in Revelation 3:5. The focus is *assurance*,

A)So we should not think that names are being constantly erased and then rewritten

B)That someone is saved one day – their name is in the Book of Life –

1)and another day, they have fallen away and their name has been blotted out from the Book of Life

C)Listen the book of life is real - There is a Book of Life,

1)and it will be opened and referenced on the Day of Judgement.

And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. (Revelation 20:12) And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:15)

There is a Book of Life, and it determines if we go to heaven or hell.

A)This means that the Book of Life is *important*.

B)There is a Book of Life, and knowing our names are written there should bring us great joy.

I don't believe that a person can lose their Salvation –

A)But the Bible is clear that a person can depart from the faith

B)What happens if they die in that state? I am not sure - but I don't want to find out

C)Abide - I am going to walk - I am going to be constantly seeking to Strengthen what remains

D)Hope you will too.