

sermon study summary

October 28 / 29, 2023

Revelation Part 6 – Sardis, Reviving a Dead Church

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Today we're looking at the church of **Sardis** which, instead of being a light to the world, was dead! They had lost the fire they were reputed to have, and were *merely going through the motions of being Christ's church*; they were **decaying** within.

There are thousands of 'dead churches' across North America and Europe. Dying churches fail to teach the gospel truth of Jesus' life, death and resurrection, and their diluted preaching accelerates their downward spiral. When we declare God's salvation through Jesus, the power of God is unleashed and the spiritual decline is reversed. Jesus calls every *dead church* to wake up, repent, become alive in the Spirit and hold fast to God's Word.

In the Book of Ezekiel, when Ezekiel obeyed God and preached to the *dry bones*, God, through the power of the Holy Spirit, *breathed life* into those bones, transforming them into a mighty army. The forces of darkness were overpowered and God's agenda was advanced. This miracle can happen to 'dead' churches in our time, too; when God's Word is preached, the Holy Spirit will revive the churches. ONLY GOD can breathe life into dying churches.

Jesus offers spiritually dead churches the gift of the Holy Spirit. When we obey His Word in following the Spirit's leading, we are filled and saturated by the Holy Spirit's presence, power and character, and the church comes alive once more! If we disobey God's commands, there is **absolutely no life in the church**. Time and again, in history, we see churches who, realizing they have lost their vibrancy and passion for the Lord, seek Him in prayer, saying, "*Come Holy Spirit!*" And God sends His winds of revival to reverse the spiritual decline, thereby renewing His Church. Every Church should pray for the Holy Spirit to come to them. As we're told: "***It's not by might, not by power, but by my Spirit says the Lord!***"

In Revelation, Jesus calls the church in Sardis to return to the Gospel message – the foundation of their faith – this *call* is true today. You cannot improvise the gospel message, which is *life changing*. The church needs to believe the gospel wholeheartedly and preach the Word of God unashamedly. Only our Lord can generate new life in a church.

Jesus warns the churches that refuse to wake up and be revived through his Holy Spirit, that if they resist this command, He will come – unexpectedly, and here, He is speaking of 'judgment'. Jesus also promises the people of Sardis that the handful of people who remain faithful to Him will **not be blotted out from the Book of Life**, but that He will acknowledge them before his Father and angels.

In this world, living the *spiritual life* is a battle, and despite our determination to read the Bible, pray daily, go to church weekly, we may fail because of varying opposition within/without ourselves. However, in *heaven* – where those who have accepted Christ as our Lord and Saviour will go to when we die – Jesus will claim us as his son or daughter, because he redeemed us with His precious blood!

Finally, we must fix our eyes on the promise of Christ and the glorious day when we see Him face-to-face! As children of God, let's pray for Him to renew and restore his church so that we are alive and ready for **his next coming!**

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IN – PURSUE RELATIONSHIP

1. **What brand names do you automatically gravitate to when shopping? Which do you avoid? Why?**
2. **What wakeup call from God affected you the most profoundly?**

UP – PURSUE GOD

Read Revelation 3:1-6 in 2-3 different translations.

3. **What was the contrast between the reputation and reality of the church in Sardis in verses 1-3? How did the church come to be where it was? What did they need to do to remedy the situation?**
4. How and why may Jesus' promises (v 4-5) urge the church in Sardis to follow Jesus' exhortations (v 2-3)? How may this be an incentive for you?

OUT – PURSUE MISSION

5. **What are qualities of 'alive' or 'dead' churches? Do these differ from an individual Christian considered 'alive' or 'dead'? What is needed for God to reverse spiritual decline?**
6. Typically, we don't know that we've fallen asleep until we wake up. How may we live so that we walk in a state of spiritual alertness?

THE WORD

Revelation 3:1-6

"To the angel of the church in Sardis write:

These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. ² Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have found your deeds unfinished in the sight of my God. ³ Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; hold it fast, and repent. But 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.

⁴ Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy. ⁵ The one who is victorious will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out the name of that person from the book of life, but will acknowledge that name before my Father and his angels. ⁶ Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

For Personal Reflection / Prayer:

Carefully and prayerfully read this letter again. What is the Holy Spirit saying to you personally in this letter? What is He leading you to do in response?

This week's writers: Asha Phillips, Gene and Karen Gibbs and Sandi Somers

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