

## Understanding Revelation Part 6

### The Dead Church

Revelation 3:1-6

Have you ever heard of the company that makes blank bumper stickers? They're for people who don't want to get involved and do not want to offend anyone.

That is how we see many religious groups in our modern day.

So called preachers place their voices on the airways, admitting that they do not deal with sin because they do not want to be negative.

We are living in a wonderful day because we know that Jesus is coming soon.

Yet we are living in a very dangerous and sad day, seeing many that seem to have a form of godliness, but are denying the power and principles of God's ways.

Today, we will look at the fifth church, the church in **Sardis**.

Sardis was a city that was about thirty miles southeast of Thyatira.

It was **known as a great trade center of the world**. It was a wealthy city.

The Pactolus river that ran through it, was a gold bearing stream.

It was an industrious city, as it was the greatest distributor of wool.

**At the same time, it was a wicked city.**

History tells us that the inhabitants were pleasure seeking and loose in their living.

It is said that the name Sardis became a byword for slack and feminine living.

This church was not as persecuted as others prior. **It was a complacent church.**

A. T. Robertson **described it as "the city of Death," a city of softness and luxury, of apathy and immorality,"**

I have not dealt with the prophetic applications of these churches, but want to put just a small portion in at this point of our study.

In prophetic terms, it is believed that Thyatira represented the Dark ages, yet there was a remnant that was in that time frame.

From that remnant of saved people came the Reformation.

Now in Sardis, it represented the time that entered into the Reformation. The world was changing.

A new study of the Bible began with the invention of the printing press.

A few, the remnant, stood in opposition to the false doctrines of the Jezebels of the dark age of Thyatira.

Yet it fell short of what could have been achieved.

It is an historical fact, that the church of the reformation boasted of Doctrine and out of it came great understandings of Bible doctrines.

Many began to reveal truth, thought their doctrines were tainted.

Even today, some of the doctrines that came out of this time of history has caused confusion.

They had a name, yet carnality and looseness was common, therefore the "orthodoxy" or "Doctrine" of that day was dead!

**Complacency saps energy and dulls attitudes.**

The first symptom is satisfaction with things as they are.

The second is rejection of things as they might be.

"Good enough" becomes today's watchword and tomorrow's standard.

**Complacency makes people fear the unknown, mistrust the untried, and abhor the new.**

Like water, complacent people follow the easiest course, downhill.

Mankind is unstable as water. We naturally follow the path of least resistance and without Christ, will end up at the lowest point.

**A dead doctrine leads to dead religion.**

This was a message from the Redeemer.

John was penning the words, but they were from God.

He is the God that has the seven Spirits.

God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are one God.

They have always been, evermore shall be, and always are one.

Seven is the number of completion, and this is the fulfillment of Christ having the fullness of the Spirit of God upon him.

John Gill said that this represented, "the fullness and perfection of the gifts and graces of the Spirit of God."

God is one, yet is manifested to us in three persons, or offices.

**Seven Spirits speaks of the fullness of the Spirit of God.**

That it rests upon Jesus seen in (Isa 11:2-3) "*And 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*); *And shall make him of quick understanding* ) in

*the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears."*

It was prophesied that the Spirit would rest upon the Messiah.

This was a permanent resting that will not just come upon Him, but was there eternally.

There are seven things that relate between the Spirit and the Messiah in this prophecy.

There is wisdom, understanding (discernment), counsel, mighty strength, knowledge, the fear of the Lord (that which demands reverence).

The seventh attribute says the Spirit would "make him of quick understanding"

The word "understanding" interestingly is translated "smell" eight times in the Old Testament.

It literally means that the seventh work of the Spirit was to make Him of sweet aroma to others.

What a great association of the Rose of Sharon.

**\*We will not be the church we should be without the Fullness of the Spirit of God**

Jesus is the One who has the seven stars. He is the Head of the Church, He is the ultimate authority.

Biblically, the pastor is the earthly overseer, or steward, of the Lord's flock. But it is His flock.

Many become arrogant and act as if they are building their own kingdom.

As ministers, we are not building our kingdoms, we are serving in His.

He is the head and He is the authority over all.

**Colossians 1:18** declares, *"And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence."*

The stars are the pastors of the seven churches. He has them in His hand.

This is a picture that these pastors were God's men.

Each pastor is greatly and personally accountable to Christ and Christ alone.

This is a fearful position, abused by many, and the greatest accountability.

I am not saying that a pastor is not accountable to his flock and other pastors.

I am saying that in contrast with the accountability of a pastor to Christ, all other accountability is as nothing.

Human accountability pails in the light of the accountability that leadership of a church has to Christ.

In verse one of chapter three, we see a rebuke.

Again, Jesus declares, *"I know thy works."*

The other four churches, up to this point, were commended first, but not Sardis.

He told them that they had a name.

The church had a saved remnant, and were reported as famous for their faith, diligence, and had every appearance of a progressing church; but they had a problem, the church as a whole was dead.

The majority was probably lost, but even the saved remnant had a dead faith to the world because their lives did not back up what they said they believed.

Their faith, without suitable works, was dead, and they were no better than hypocrites.

They needed to learn the rudimentary teachings of the book of **James 2:17** *"Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone."*

It is evident that **Sardis had a large portion of their church that were lost.**

There was a reaction that Jesus wanted from them.

They had been rebuked, now, in verse two, a response is expected.

They were to be watchful, that is vigilant and alert.

The sleeping church should awake to righteousness.

They were to strengthen things that were alive, though barely.

They needed a fresh diligence.

They were to be thorough in their works.

Their works were not what they should be.

They were imperfect, and incomplete before Him.

This could also be a picture of unfaithful believers, or some that were not believers at all.

**The church is admonished to remember.**

They were not to throw away the things that they knew were right.

In verse 3, they are to call to mind the things that they had been taught.

It was necessary for them to give attention to sound doctrine.

This church was to hold fast, that is, they were to attend to carefully the things they should know.

In **Hebrews 2:1**, we read, *"Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip."*

This remembrance would lead them to repentance.

They needed to get back to the Truth and wake up.

**It is my belief that God despises a church that is full of deadness.**

Deadness of people that fill the pews but are not genuine is futile in existence.

A deadness of our worship when we are bound down by the world's ways would be contrary to Him.

Our theology needs to be alive. Our doxology needs to be alive.

All our "...ologies" need to have the life of Christ in them.

He must be in the center of it all and the worldliness of modern times must be rejected.

I refuse to be a dead, dry, going through the motions, dread going to church, backsliden Christian.

The danger is some are lost, and in a routine, while some are saved, but dried up on the vine.

Repentance is needed.

**The reason I believe many of them were lost, that is dead, is the Lord's reference to a remnant in verse 4.**

There were a few, a small group of godly saints, a few that were undefiled.

God has always, and will always have a people. They had garments that were undefiled.

This causes me to consider a soldier or sailor that is in uniform.

It is pressed and all elements of it are in place.

There were some that did not defile themselves by unbelieving.

They were not guilty of an unbecoming walk.

They could not be accused of a denial of Christ or embracing false doctrines.

This remnant was promised an eternal fellowship, walking with the Lord.

I do not only walk with the Lord by faith in this present time, but I am going to take a stroll across eternity with Jesus.

The saved are made worthy to do this.

We are not worthy ourselves, not of works, but worthy because we had been genuinely redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.

Genuinely saved people are not just religious, but redeemed.

There is much controversy in the media and many liberal news anchors like to ask if someone believes that a Muslim or Jew will go to heaven.

The answer is very simple. A Muslim, Jew, Hindu, Mormon, Baptist, Methodist, or pagan can all go to heaven the same way.

Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven.

It is not religion or affiliation that redeems, but faith solely in Jesus and His death, burial and resurrection.

Any less for any group will bring damnation.

Jesus declared this in His own words in **John 14:6**, as He declared to Thomas, "*I am the way, the truth and the life, no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me.*"

What more can be said, Jesus is the only way.

The Jews had a saying somewhat like this, "they that walk with God in their lifetime, 'are worthy' to walk with him after their death." In **2 Thessalonians 2:3-5**, we read that,

*We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth; So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure: Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer.*

This manifest token is the proof of God's work in our lives.

It is only by the work of God that we can be counted worthy of the kingdom of God.

**Not only is their a remnant, but a rejoicing.** The lost have nothing over which they can rejoice.

We will rejoice that we are robed in white.

White raiment was used among the Romans as a token of joy at festivals, and on birthdays, and at weddings, and such like times.

It gives a glimpse of the imputed righteousness of Christ. The saved are pure in Him.

Also, the name is in the book of life. An indication of some being blotted out is evident.

Though many books are mentioned, it seems clear that some are blotted out of this book, so who are?

All that die without Christ will die the second death, that is they will not exist as far as God is concerned.

They will not be in any of His books.

This is simple when you consider Jewish traditions.

A custom among the Jews and Gentiles of registering the inhabitants of the city.

All that were born were put in the book, and when they died, they were taken out of the book.

Jesus never blots His redeemed out of the book, only those that die without Him.

We are not saved by works, so we cannot earn a spot in the book.

We do not keep our spot by works. This is the book of life, a list of all for whom Christ died!

At some point, all humanity, all that have possessed life, the inhabitants of the world are in the book.

Again, to make the point clear, when a person dies, if they have not received Christ, their name is blotted out, or wiped away, out of the book.

When a person is saved, their name is confirmed in that book forever and their name is "confessed" or acknowledged openly and joyfully.

Plainly stated, the only ones who will remain in this book are those who trust Christ and have heavenly citizenship.

This causes us to ask, are you the reader a child of God.

Is your name there, or will you reject Him and your name be blotted out?

If you are saved, are you dead in your orthodoxy, only living through the motions?

I read a story of Sir Michael Costa, a conductor. Sir Michael Costa was conducting a rehearsal in which the orchestra was joined by a great chorus. About halfway through the session, with trumpets blaring, drums rolling, and violins singing their rich melody, the piccolo player muttered to himself, "What good am I doing? I might as well not be playing. Nobody can hear me anyway."

So he placed his instrument to his lips but made no sound. Within moments the conductor cried, "Stop! Stop! Where's the piccolo?"

Perhaps many people did not realize that the piccolo was missing, but the most important one did.

So it is in the Christian life.

God knows when we do not play the part assigned to us, even if other do not.

We must not be dead in our walk with Christ.

May our lives be real, evident and vibrant in this realm as we serve the Lord.