

Sardis - The Dead Church Revelation 3:1-6

Dead things pose no threat.

Sardis was a city of fading glory. It had at once been the capital of Lydia. It was founded about 1200 BC and at its peak of Glory its king, Croesus, was so wealthy that his name became an idiomatic expression. So and so was said to be "as rich as Croesus." Its glory and wealth owed to two interesting geological peculiarities. First Sardis was about 30 miles south of Thyatira and was situated on top of a 1500 foot plateau that jutted out from Mt Tmolis. Only from the mountain could one approach the city. Sheer rock walls gave it a virtually impregnable defense. Second, a river that ran at the base of the mountain, Pactolus, was found to be full of gold. Thus Sardis became the first city in the world to mint gold and silver coins. It became a very attractive city drawing people for both the wealth and security. Aesop the famed fable writer is recorded as a citizen of Sardis. It was a very important city and actually challenged Persia and king Cyrus Rule.

But it was a city of fading Glory. Yes it was. Twice, the city was taken in spite of its seemingly invincible situation. The people of Sardis became overconfident and complacent and felt no one could invade the mountain fortress. Cyrus put the city to siege and was ready to give up when a soldier saw a guard drop his helmet and carefully slip down a hidden path to retrieve it. That same night the Persians one by one scaled that hidden path and overthrew the city because no one was watching. That happened in 549 BC. Once again a similar fate befell them in 218 BC when Antiochus the Great overt took them. In both cases a sense of invincibility and a failure of the sentries to watch and protect cost them their city.

By the time of the writing in Revelation the city still had a reputation because of its glorious past. But today Sardis is no more – it is dead.

The church at Sardis was in the same condition. They were described as dead. They had a reputation, a glorious past, activities, programs and a general busyness that gave the idea that something was happening, Jesus said it was dead. The church at Sardis was dead. It was not being persecuted or hindered in any

way by society because it was of no consequence. A dead church presents no problem to Satan so he doesn't even bother.

Someone said that a church or mission starts with

- A man with a **vision**
- Becomes a **movement**
- Then becomes a **machine**
- And finally becomes a **monument**.

When Jesus comes to our Church, he comes with a stethoscope as it were to see about the condition of a church.

Read Passage: Revelation 3:1-6

1. He makes a **prognosis** of its health - Rev 3:1
 - a. He has a hold on the **pastor** (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 5:2)
 - b. He has his hand on the **power** (Isaiah 11:2; John 14)
 - i. Is 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.
 - ii. John 14 - The number seven means the sevenfold ministry of the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ Himself spelled this out in the upper room where He revealed who the Holy Spirit was to be:
 - iii. *Re 4:5 And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.*
 - iv. *Re 5:6 And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth.*
 - v. **WE CAN GET ALONG WITHOUT LOTS OF EQUIPMENT, BUILDINGS AND STUFF BUT WE CANNOT GET ALONG WITHOUT THE PRESENCE OF THE Holy Spirit!**
 - c. He has his finger on the **pulse** (Hebrews 4:13)
 - i. Jesus discerns between **reputation** and reality.

- ii. Jesus distinguishes between ritual performance and spiritual **power**.
2. He makes out a **prescription** for life Rev 3:2-3
- a. **Watch** – for signs of death
 - i. A dying church rests on its **past** accomplishments and is satisfied with its present state.
 - ii. A dying church is more concerned about their **traditions** and their formalities than they are about spirituality.
 - iii. A dying church grabs hold of **trivialities** like, bumper stickers, slogans, bracelets, “T” shirts and silly passing fads instead of getting hold of truth, power and love that come from the Holy Spirit of God.
 - iv. A dying church is more concerned about its **reputation** than about reaching people with the gospel.
 - v. A dying church is more concerned about social justice than seeing people **Justified** by God’s grace.
 - vi. A dying church is more concerned with **material** growth than it is with spiritual growth.
 - vii. A dying church seeks **men’s approval** more than God’s approval.
 - viii. A dying church is one that loses its **conviction** that the Bible is the Word of God.
 - ix. Watch also for signs of life:
 - 1. **Growth** – not only numerical but personal
 - 2. **Harmony** – not like cancer
 - 3. **Emotion** - A living church is an emotional church!
There will be times when we will laugh together, weep together, shout together, sing together, hurt together, and pray together. In other words, when there is life, there is emotion.
 - 4. **Action** – The church does things. It is doing the work of discipleship. It is seeking the lost. It is helping the helpless. It is meeting needs. It is showing love. It is fulfilling its ministry. MINISTRY FAIR!
 - b. **Work** – don’t live on the past

- i. **Revive** the unfinished work – We are not finished with the work in Des Moines.
 - ii. **Remember** the former work – HOW YOU RECEIVED AND HEARD! HOW WILL THE NEXT GENERATION SEE AND HEAR?
 - iii. **Repent** of unfruitful work – God has given us a commandment and a commission. Are we doing it?
 - c. **Wait** – don't be caught off guard
3. He makes **promises** to the living Rev 3:4-5
- a. They will be **robed** in white garments - the few in the group that had not soiled their garments are told twice that they will walk with Him in White. They are victors, overcomers and have been given the righteousness of Jesus.
 - b. They will be **registered** in God's book – I will not blot out his name.
 - i. Exodus 32:32 – book of the living
 - ii. Revelation 21:27 – Lamb's book of life
 - iii. Luke 10:20 – the reason to rejoice is because our names are written in heaven
 - c. They will be **recognized** by God's Son. Well **done** – not 'well said' or well thought out! Well done! What a blessing to be introduced by Jesus to the Father!
 - i. *Heb 2:11* For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren,
 - ii. *Heb 11:16* But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.
4. He makes it all **personal** - Revelation 3:6
- a. Can you hear me **now**?
 - b. Will you respond **now**?

1) *1 John 5:4-5 tells us. For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world— our faith. ⁵ Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? Are you an overcomer? Have you overcome the pull of this world, the evil of the world and the damnation of this world? You can only do so by faith – by believing in Jesus!*