

God's Challenge to the Church

Sermon Five: "Wake Up"

Revelation 3: 1 - 6 (NIV)

August 12, 2010

Revelation 3:1-6 (NIV)

1 "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 not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God.

3 Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, 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 He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels.

6 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

- It is believed by many that the **church in Sardis** is perhaps the most typical of all the churches referred to in Revelation, of this twenty-first century church age.
- From all of the outward indications, this church in Sardis was a very impressive ministry.
- This church had all of the external things that usually impress us as carnal human beings: huge elaborate facilities, lots of *religious-acting* people, orderly and timely programs, as well as a good reputation in the community.

- However, these things can only take you so far; sooner or later you must produce fruit.
- We are told that this church in Sardis **had a reputation of being alive and thriving**.
- But the truth of the matter was that **their reputation was greatly exaggerated**.
- They had what the Apostle Paul called in **II Timothy 3:5**, "A form of godliness, but with no power".
- In other words, they appeared to have been alive and thriving, but in fact **were very much a spiritually dead church**.
- They had a lot of motion, but no movement; A lot of flash, but very little impact...
- People from all over **were being entertained, but not transformed**.
- The church in Sardis was **highly regarded** by civic and community leaders of that day.
- In fact, they were more highly thought of by the civic and community leaders of Sardis than they were by the Lord.
- It takes more than flash and grandstanding to impress the Lord.
- For God says to the Prophet Samuel in **I Samuel 16:7**:

"The Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart".

- Transformation through **the changing of one's heart** moves the Lord more than big buildings or organized programs.
- In **v.1** of the text Jesus describes Himself as:

"Him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars".

- He is saying that He alone controls both **the spirit** that guides these seven churches, as well as **the ministers** who have been given the task of leading them.
- The Lord, usually in His letter to each church, commends them for the good that they are doing. **But in the case of this church, He had nothing good to say.**
- This had to have been a great shock to them, for they undoubtedly thought highly of themselves.
- The Lord says to this church in **v.1**,

"... I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead".

- He wanted them to know that unlike many that were singing their praises, **He was not impressed with their reputation...**

- For He knew the real deal, that **they were spiritually dead**.
- In **v. 2** the Lord **calls for a spiritual revival — a fresh renewed Pentecostal experience**, where people are transformed, healed and delivered.
- He says to them;

“Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die”.

- In the **Amplified Bible**, it says:

“Rouse yourself and keep awake”.

- The Lord goes on to say to this church in **v.3** of the text:

“Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard, obey it, and repent.

- They did not need a new ministry or another conference. They needed **a good old-fashioned revival** that would lead to fundamental change in people’s lives (**transformation**).
- They were warned in **v.3** that if there was no revival that would lead to transformation, then the Lord would come as a thief **and strip them of everything they have**.
- Finally, to **the few** in the church of Sardis who had not defiled themselves, the Lord in **v.4** sends **a Word of encouragement**. He says,

*“They **will walk with me**, dressed in white, for they are worthy”.*

- **God’s Challenge to the Church!**