

Raised To Life From The Dead
Revelation 3:1-6

Sardis was the capital city of Lydia. It was part of the Persian kingdom until it was conquered by Alexander the Great. It was the central place of worship for Artemis the goddess of the hunt and the wilderness and fertility. It was founded about 1,200 BC. The original city sat on the top of a 1,500-foot-high plateau. There was one narrow road leading into the city, and the other sides of the plateau were just steep cliffs. This made the city very safe and nearly impenetrable by invading armies.

Sardis was the home of Aesop, whose fables we all heard as children. Gold and silver coins were first minted here. It was also famous for carpet, wool, and dyed cloth industries, with the art of dyeing being invented at Sardis. The Church at Sardis was submerged in the culture of the city and took on the characteristics of the city.

At one time, Sardis had been one of the greatest cities in the world. It reached its zenith under King Croesus. King Croesus and Sardis were famed around the world for their wealth. It was common to hear the phrase, "*As wealthy as Croesus.*"

Sardis was still a wealthy, powerful city, but it was just a shell of its former self when John's letter from Jesus arrived. The people had grown lazy, degenerate, immoral, and complacent. Sardis was dying through apathy and indifference.

Over time, the church in Sardis had adopted the atmosphere of the city. The church had become a thermometer that registered the temperature of the city instead of a thermostat that changed the temperature of the city. It is to this church that had become lazy, apathetic, and complacent that the Lord Jesus comes to speak to it. Just as surely as the city of Sardis was dying, so was the church of Christ in that city.

The city was proud of its past. It was proud of its reputation, but its reputation was all it had left. For all intents and purposes, the city of Sardis was dead, even while it lived.

The church in Sardis was not only being attacked by the enemy and persecuted by the culture, the church in Sardis had decided to not make waves in the culture. They had adopted a mindset of "Let's not go against the culture."

They looked alive, but they were dead because they had compromised the distinctiveness of Christ. There is a divisive reality about Jesus Christ. He makes you choose. Jesus has no words of commendation for the church in Sardis, but He does have some words of counsel.

The church at Ephesus was called the loveless church, and Jesus said, "Return to your first love." The church at Smyrna was called the persecuted church. The church at Pergamum was called the compromising church. The church at Thyatira, which we learned about last week, was called the corrupt church. Sardis is "The Dead Church." The word dead means "to be *deprived of life, destitute of force or power. To be ineffective and inoperative.*" The church in Sardis had taken on the character of the city in which she resided.

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. Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have found your deeds unfinished in the sight of my God. 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. 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. 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. Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches." Revelation 3:1-6

There were three kinds of Christians in the letter to Sardis

1. If You're Dead, You Need Resurrection.

"I know your deeds; You have a reputation that you're alive, but you are dead." Revelation 3:1

You're a big church, and a lot of people hear your name and think you're doing great things, but you're actually dead. Sardis built a synagogue that was the largest synagogue of that day. It was the size of a football field.

"Wake up!" Revelation 3:2

"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." Revelation 3:3

King Croesus was the wealthiest king in the world who ruled the region on Asia Minor. To keep himself safe, he built a city fortification that was impregnable, and no army could take it. He and the people of the city became complacent in their wealth, their power, and their city's apparent invincibility. When King Cyrus of the book of Daniel fame came, he could not take the city, so he put his soldiers around the camp and put the city in siege. One night, one of Cyrus's soldiers was on the wall looking over the wall and his helmet fell off. He went down the stairs, opened a secret door, grabbed his helmet, and went back in. Now Cyrus had his key. When nightfall came, Cyrus and his troops followed. The troops went to the opposite side of the walls and created a distraction. Then, all of Croesus' army went to that side of the city, and Cyrus' special forces went through the little door. They entered the city while the people slept and conquered Sardis. When Croesus thought he was safe, he was not. That happened not once, but twice. When the Persians invaded, they discovered the secret door and entered the city by night and conquered them. Just when they thought they were safe, they were not.

If there are places in your life that are dead or dying, you can still wake up. Is there something dead or dying in you? You need to wake up.

We don't like to say, "My prayer life is dead." Is your prayer life as alive as it once was, or is it dying a little bit?

There are many times when the Scripture refers to death as sleep. When Lazarus died, Jesus said, "Lazarus is asleep." When Paul wrote about the Christians who had already died, he said, "I don't want you to be unaware of those who have fallen asleep."

Because of the resurrection power of the Holy Spirit, even if you're dead as a believer, you can wake up. The Holy Spirit can wake you up. There's still hope for you.

"These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars." Revelation 3:1

The seven Spirits of God represent the Holy Spirit because He's the fullness of God, and Jesus is the fullness of God. God is complete within Himself. The Holy Spirit and His power bring dead things back to life. If you're dead and need to wake up, the only way you can wake up is by the power of the Holy Spirit.

"The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by the same Spirit living within you." Romans 8:11

If you've got something dead or dying in you, the only way to resurrect it is by the Holy Spirit.

When Elisha died, they put him in a tomb. A short time later, another man died. As they were burying him, some thieves came along, so they threw him in the tomb on the bones of Elisha, and when his body touched Elisha's bones, he came back to life.

What about your relationship with God?

What about your marriage?

What about your family?

What about your finances?

What about your health?

The Holy Spirit is the only One who can bring dead things back to life. "The same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead dwells in you and will quicken your mortal bodies."

2. If You're Dying, You Can Have Revival.

"Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have found your deeds unfinished in the sight of my God."
Revelation 3:2

Jesus has three pieces of advice that are a recipe for revival.

"Remember what you have received and learned; hold it fast and repent." Revelation 3:3

- Remember

"Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard." Revelation 3:3

- Reclaim

"hold it fast" Revelation 3:3

"Hold fast to what you've heard." 2 Timothy 1:13

When you need to get your joy or your peace or your love back, you've got to remember how you got it in the first place. Reclaim those works. The way you got it in the first place was that you spent time in His presence and in His Word.

"In Your presence is fullness of joy." Psalm 16:11

"You will make me full of joy in Your presence." Acts 2:28

- Repent

"and repent." Revelation 3:3

The pressure they faced in their "get along" culture is not much different than the current "get along" culture of our day.

Hold fast to what you have so you don't lose your crown, and always "guard the truth." This is a military term that means the truth is being attacked. We guard this truth because it is the heart of our message.

3. If You're a Dedicated Christian, You Will Be Rewarded.

"Those who have not defiled the garments; they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life..."
Revelation 3:4

"They had soiled their garments." Revelation 3:4

They had brushed up against something that had stained them, and the prescription was to keep their garments clean. In the Bible, white is a color that symbolizes purity. Particularly in the book of Revelation. For example, we read about a white stone, a white cloud, white horses, and then we are told about a great white throne. This color represents purity and cleanliness.

There were people in Sardis who had kept themselves pure, who had kept themselves holy, who had kept their light shining brightly. Their fire burned hot for the Lord Jesus Christ, and because they had kept themselves pure, they were going to be clothed in purity because purity not only desires purity, purity deserves purity.

"walk with me in white robes." Revelation 3:4

Ancient kings would walk in victory processions, and those who were in his kingdom and lived in his freedom would walk in white robes.

"I will not take your name out of the Lamb's book of life." Revelation 3:5

Our world may write us off, but He will never write us off.

This is hard to hear because who doesn't want to get along? Who doesn't want to believe that everybody is right and nobody is wrong?

There was a remnant at Sardis that maintained their walk with God, they remained filled with the Holy Spirit, and they were just madly in love with Jesus Christ. They knew the reality, and they were praying for revival.

"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." Revelation 3:5

"Whoever confesses Me before men, I'll confess before My Father...but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels." Matthew 10:32

One of these days, those of us who overcome and remain faithful and true to Jesus are going to be taken by the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are going to be led up past all of the marshaled ranks of the angels as they line the golden streets of glory. We are going to be led up past the cherubim and seraphim. We are going to be led up to the very throne of God Himself, and before all of these myriads of angels, seraphim, cherubim, and before all the tribes and nations of this earth, Jesus is going to introduce us, one by one, name by name, and He is going to say, "Father, this is your faithful servant."

It pays to serve Jesus. It pays every day. It pays every step of the way, and it pays in riches foretold, yet riches untold, that will come to the one who will remain faithful and true and pure and hold fast to the Lord Jesus Christ.