

## THE DEAD CHURCH



David Wilkerson March 10, 2016

The church in Sardis started out in great apostolic power, with God's blessing and favor. In Revelation 3, Christ tells the pastor at Sardis: "I know you started out with a powerful reputation, but you have allowed the life I gave you to ebb away. Tell this to your congregation: 'You are dead. Will you have the capacity to hear this word, accept it and be aroused by it?'"

Beloved, if Jesus calls a congregation dead, it is dead! Yet Christ tells us there was also in that church a holy, wide-awake remnant, and says He still has hope for them: "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments" (Revelation 3:4).

When Jesus speaks of "defiled garments" here, He is describing spiritual death. What caused the defilement of those believers in Sardis? It happened because something had hold of their hearts, a "special interest." At one time, the center of everyone's life was God's interests: charitable works, a missions mindset, the faithful gathering of His Body. Simply put, Christ's work had been their chief concern. But now, everyone was running after his own interests.

Sardis was a prosperous town, known for gold smelting and the making of fine garments. Evidently, the Christians in Sardis became enamored of the surrounding culture of prosperity, and their focus shifted. They quickly began drifting away from the Lord's interests toward a materialistic mind-set.

By all outward appearances, nobody could fault these Christians for their pursuits. They were making a living, building up their businesses, and taking care of their families. Yet these things became so all-consuming that they began to neglect the works of God. So Jesus issued a warning to the faithful remnant there: "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect [finished] before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent" (Revelation 3:2–3).

What does Jesus mean here when He speaks of things "that are about to die"? He's saying, "Beware! The excitement you once had for My house—your passion for My Word, your joy of public worship, your love for one another—has been dying. Slumber is falling over your eyes, and you've grown lukewarm. Wake up now! If you don't, you could end up spiritually dead."

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