

A MORGUE WITH A STEEPLE
Revelation 3:1-6

The church in Sardis was made up of living corpses! They no doubt sang hymns, prayed, gave, taught and talked; yet they were dead. Christ in a confronting fashion exhorted them to wake up and to repent. Such a strange phenomenon is not limited to the first century. It happens frequently today. We have to ask ourselves, "Is First Baptist a morgue with a belltower?"

- I. The Condition – Revelation 3:1
 - A. The description of the church
 - 1. This is one of the two churches that the Lord has nothing good to say.
 - 2. This church had an illustrious past, but they had so adopted the surrounding comfortable, self-indulgent, decadent lifestyle that when John wrote they had become spiritually lifeless.
 - 3. This church held a haughty, unconquerable aspect on the outside but was weak and crumbling on the inside due to neglect and careless confidence.
 - 4. About 70 years before John wrote the letter, Sardis was destroyed by an earthquake. The church, like the city, was a has-been.
 - B. The description of Christ
 - 1. He is the one with the seven spirits of God which speaks of the Holy Spirit.
 - a. This church did not have the Holy Spirit. Either there were many unsaved present or they had effectively quenched Him right out of the church.
 - 2. He is the one who holds the seven stars which speaks of His power.
 - 3. The picture here is that Christ is over both the Holy Spirit and the pastor. He is the highest authority.
- II. The Complaint – vv. 1-2
 - A. They had a name at one time alive but now they are dead – v. 1.
 - 1. According to their evaluation they were alive and well.
 - 2. According to God's evaluation they were devoid of spiritual life and power.
 - B. They were living on a past reputation.
 - 1. This once-great city had lapsed into decline; so had the church once been spiritually vibrant but no longer.
 - 2. The church was living on memories of yesterday.
 - 3. Both churches and individuals throughout history have evidenced signs of death.
 - a. Worship of the past
 - b. Greater concern with form than with life
 - c. Love of tradition more than love for Christ
 - d. Inflexibility and resistance to change
 - e. Loss of evangelistic, missionary fervor
 - C. The things which remain are ready to die – v. 2.
 - D. Their works, as good as they might think them, fell short of what the Lord required them to be: They were not perfect, that is, fulfilled before God.
 - 1. Those who are dead are still under the bondage and curse of sin.
 - 2. Those who are alive were made so by the shed blood of Christ.
 - 3. Those alive should not live like those who are dead.

- III. Commands that Lead to Correction – vv. 2-3
- A. Keep on being watchful; get with it; become alert; take stock, think things through, be real in observing yourself.
1. Pay attention to corroding influences in your beliefs and practices.
 2. Solidify, strengthen what you believe so that it is not easily corrupted. Twice the natural fortress of Sardis fell because they were not watchful for the enemy.
 3. Our Christian life can likewise be destroyed if we do not pay attention to our enemies and defend against them.
- B. They were to keep on strengthening the things that remain.
1. There apparently were a few in Sardis that were alive and attentive to Christ.
 - a. They had maintained the sharp edge in their spiritual walk.
 - b. They had been able to shake loose from the impending death rattle around them.
 2. Tradition concerning the fall of Sardis was that the enemy entered through a breach in the wall that was left open because they felt that no one could enter through it because of its location. We are not to think that any area of our Christian life is to be despised or small and therefore we can ignore it.
- C. Keep on remembering – v. 3.
1. Christ called their attention to two things worthy of reflection.
 - a. What you have received. Like us today they received such things as eternal life, faith, spiritual gifts and forgiveness.
 - b. What you have heard
 1. They had been exposed to God’s truth, its application, and its impact.
 2. Hebrews 2:1
 2. Those who inhabited the city the second time it was taken were the very ones who had climbed the walls previously to take the city. It is crucial that we learn the lessons which God has for us, even in our defeats, so that we will not fall again.
- D. Hold fast – v. 3.
1. Keep on keeping.
 2. The people of Sardis were to personally and specifically weave the truth of God through their lives, putting it into practice, which results in godly action and habit.
 3. This is a major secret in attacking “the blahs” – Ezek 33:23-33.
- E. Repent – v. 3.
1. Do it now.
 2. The four previous verbs were continuous action verbs. This one calls for those of Sardis to make an immediate decision to turn around and come back to Him.
 3. This was a tremendous step for them as it would require them to admit that the great name that their church had and that all the history and tradition of the church was in reality nothing.
 4. This would require a humbling of themselves.
 - a. We all allow our pride to stand in the way of God’s blessing on our lives by being too proud to admit that we are wrong.
 - b. We too need to repent, to change our mind, about actions which are not in accord with Scripture.
- F. Watch - Warning to arouse response – v. 3.
1. If they did not watch, Christ was going to suddenly and unexpectedly come to His unrepentant, dead church to inflict harm and destruction.

- IV. Promise to the Faithful – vv. 4-5
- A. As there are in most dead assemblies today, in Sardis there were a few who were faithful.
1. Who have not defiled their garments.
 - a. “Defiled” means to smear, to pollute or to stain and “garments” refer to character. There were a few whose character was still godly.
 2. They shall walk with Me in white.
 - a. The white garments of all the redeemed speak of holiness and purity. Such white robes are reserved for Christ, angels, and the glorified church. In the ancient world, white robes were commonly worn at festivals and celebrations.
 3. For they are worthy.
- B. To those and to the ones who join them in overcoming, Christ offered three promises – vv. 5-6:
1. He shall be clothed in white garments – v. 5.
A promise of eternal life and righteousness – Rev 19:8
 2. I will not erase his name from the book of life – a promise of a place in heaven – v. 5.
 - a. Every city had a register of the honorable citizen. When a man committed an act which would disgrace him, his name would be blotted from the city register.
 - b. This statement is declaring that there is absolutely no way, no sin, no act which can cause a believer’s name to be removed from the heavenly register – John 14:1-4.
 3. I will confess, announce, his name before my Father and before His angels a promise of personal representation – v. 6.
 - a. Jesus is telling the Father, “This is one of mine, Father; I confess this before Thee, and my blood avails for him.”
- C. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Conclusion: A church that once had a name died. What happened in Sardis can happen to First Baptist. To keep living requires thinking and willingness to change.