

What God Expects of the Church | Part 4

Lesson 9

Revelation 3:1-6

January 29, 2023

Cure for a Dead Church

INTRODUCTION

How does one read the book of Revelation? As a “preterist,” who believes the book was written only for first-century Christians? Or, can it be viewed as a message intended for contemporary readers?

As with all of scripture inspired by God, Revelation is relevant to every generation, and is especially appropriate in the twenty-first century when churches are threatened to the point of extinction by apostasy, secular distraction, reinvention of morality, and the resistance of heart and brain. Nor should we be unaware of emerging forces outside the church that vandalize, denigrate, and politicize: formidable warriors in Satan’s army.

Revelation’s apocalyptic imagery may be difficult to grasp, but John was assigned by Christ to write in exactly this style. Our Savior’s goal, as stated in the memory verse, is to prevent the church’s sudden death. It should be the goal of church members, as well.

Memory verse: “Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have found your deeds unfinished in the sight of my God.”—Revelation 3:2

Pray, and read Revelation 3:1-6. What questions or observations do you have about this passage?

OBSERVATION: What do the passages say?

1. The “seven spirits of God” (Revelation 3:1a) suggests a plural entity when it is actually a singular body. What (who) then, is it? (Refer to Revelation 5:6 and Isaiah 11:2). The “seven stars” (Revelation 3:3:1a) represent what group of people? (See Revelation 1:20 and Bible commentary)
2. What has been the reputation of the church in Sardis? (Revelation 3:1b)
3. What should the Sardis church do to avoid death? (Revelation 3:2-3)
4. Who are the “worthy” people of Sardis? (Revelation 3:4)
5. How does one retain his/her name in the “book of life”? (Revelation 3:5)

INTERPRETATION: What do the passages mean?

1. Compare Revelation 3:1-2 with Revelation 3:15-16.
Which passage appears more descriptive of the church today, and why?
2. Jesus' portrayal of the Sardis church's condition in Revelation 3:1-2 is stern and resolute. What issues could have been leading this church to spiritual death? (Proverbs 8:36; Romans 8:13; Ephesians 2:1-2; James 2:14)
3. When Jesus says He, "will come like a thief" (Revelation 3:3b), He is not referring to His Second Coming. Why, then, would He so describe His coming to the Sardis church? (Matthew 24:43; Revelation 2:5, 3:3)

4. Why would anyone in the Sardis church concern him/herself with the “book of life”? (Revelation 3:5; Psalm 69:28)

APPLICATION: How do the passages apply to your life?

1. Classifying yourself as a “futurist,” is it possible to equate the Sardis church with P.C.C. in any respect? If so, what do you hear Jesus saying about P.C.C.?

2. What do you think needs to be reinforced at P.C.C. with the same urgency that Jesus wanted the Sardis church to be strengthened?

3. What roles can we, as individuals, and you, in particular, adopt at P.C.C. to contribute to its vibrancy as a church "dressed in white"?