

The Letter to Sardis. Rev 3:1-6

“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. A footnote in my Bible tells me that there aren't 7 Holy Spirits but just one with 7 different attributes. These are each described in Isaiah 11:2. There's the Spirit of the Lord, Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Power, Knowledge and Fear of the Lord.

Jesus exposes this church to themselves; “Yes you have an amazing reputation but in reality it flatters you.” He doesn't say how or why the church has deteriorated, whether it be a change in leadership or a spirit of apathy has just overtaken them. Jesus tells the church, it's dead. Unlike many of the other churches in which He says something along the lines of, 'this aspect is good but...'. Here Jesus has nothing positive to describe the church, just dead. He mentions the deeds which we can assume are non-existent and we take it that their love for Him died. This church meets just for an hour a week on a Sunday.

It maybe that this church was a little bit more proactive than that but no more effective at promoting the Kingdom of God. Today, on Sky TV religious channels and YouTube you can watch church services in auditoriums the size of the O2 and when you listen to the preacher, there's a sickly smooth voice, schpeiling superlatives and groundless false positives - it's what the congregation wants to hear!

So how does a dead church get a really good reputation?

I think we've all been to churches that we've come out of feeling pretty underwhelmed. Typically, what are the telltale signs of a dead church?

However, it's not all negative. There are still a few dying embers and Jesus gives them a clue as to what they might be, describing their works or deeds as 'not perfect' which is probably an understatement. Remember how it used to be when you first believed? Repent and get back there! Then the threat of judgement just when they are not expecting it. Matthew 24:42-44. This church in many ways was similar to Ephesus but worse.

However, there was a remnant in this church who did meet with God's approval. To those few, Jesus promises: 'He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.'

White garments are standard uniform in Heaven. Acts 1:10, Revelation 4:4, Revelation 19:4

The Book of Life - Exodus 32:31, Psalm 69:27-28, Daniel 12:1 Philippians 4:3, Revelation 20:11-12.

In summary, this letter was a wake up call to a church that was asleep at the wheel!

Lessons from the letter to Sardis -

Don't rest on your laurels.

Don't pander and seek reputation and what people want to hear.

Jesus knows your every detail, not just the outward image that you want to project.

Jesus knows your distractions and temptations, keep looking to Him to overcome them.

Don't leave a church because you're unhappy; stick with it and try and change from within.

Today Sardis is called Sart. There are no known Christians in Sart today.