

Pastor Scott is caught sleeping in church, but his alarm clock wakes him up! He asks, "Honestly now, a show of hands, how many of you have ever fallen asleep in church?" Today we are talking about Sardis -The Sleeping Church; one of the Seven Letters to the Seven Churches.

In this Letter, Jesus is going to tell them twice to wake up.

Last week we read the letter to the **Church of Thyatira- The Tolerant Church** (Revelation 2:18-29). The church in Thyatira seemed to be made up of two groups of people. One group growing in **love, faith, service, and perseverance!** But the other group tolerated Jezebel and her teachings which mislead people into sexual immorality and eating food sacrificed to idols.

Christians more tolerant than Christ?

The Letter to Sardis: The Sleeping Church (Revelation 3:1-6)

Revelation 3:1 "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."

For Sardis, there is no praise, but instead Jesus goes straight to a harsh evaluation.

Wake Up!

Revelation 3:1-2 ...I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead.

2 Wake up! Someone once told me, "Your words bring me so much peace I just fall asleep." They considered it a complement to my preaching!

Jesus told them, "You are sleeping so hard, **you look dead!**"

Sardis had a reputation for being alive and thriving! That's what the city was known for.

- Sardis was the capital city of the ancient kingdom of Lydia, famous for affluence and creative culture, such as arts and crafts, (this is their gym, YMCA)
- Sardis was the first to mint gold and silver into coins.
- Sardis was the home of King Croesus who was legendary for his wealth, prosperity, and arrogant pride. In fact, Croesus' arrogance contributed to the destruction of his kingdom when he preemptively attacked the Persian armies.
- The end of Sardis was in AD 17, when an earthquake destroyed the city. Rome sent relief aid; but the city, now saddled with debt, never recovered. Sardis and Laodicea are the only two out of the seven cities that don't exist today.

Reputation Vs Reality

...you have a reputation of being alive, but (in reality) you are dead.

This is the worst thing that can happen in a church. By definition, a church should be alive in Christ and bringing life to others.

The reality of the church in North America is that it's declining.

- Every year approximately 3,500 churches close their doors. (Only about half of the new ones make it.)
- 80% of all churches in North America are plateaued or declining in numbers. (Many have abandoned biblical truth and are only involved in social causes.)

Welcome to Sardis **...you have a reputation of being alive, but (in reality) you are dead. ² Wake up!**

Stages of Spiritual Sleep

We might be more awake in one area of their spiritual life, but asleep or dead in other areas.

Laziness	I'll do better later, I'm too tired to get involved in what Jesus is doing.
Daydreaming	A lack of interest. Aware of what God wants them to do but taking no action.
Napping	In and out for Jesus. Up and down like they are on a spiritual roller coaster.
Light Sleeping	Easily awakened. There is still hope.
Sound Sleep	Unaware of what's going on around them, not soberly alert and watching.
Spiritual Coma	Mindlessly going through the rituals of religion and life in general.
Spiritually Dead	Having a form of Godliness but denying its' power. (2 Timothy 3:5)

Six Signs of a Dead or Dying Church

1. The Spirit Has Left the Building

Revelation 3:1 “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.

Seven is the number of completion in the scriptures, and here the Holy Spirit is the Seven Spirits.

- **Revelation 1:4-5** John, To the seven churches in the province of Asia: Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, 5 and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.
- **Isaiah 11:2** The Spirit 1) of the **LORD** will rest on him—2) the Spirit of **wisdom** and 3) of **understanding**, 4) the Spirit of **counsel** and 5) of **might**, 6) the Spirit of the **knowledge** and 7) **fear of the LORD**— The Seven-Fold Spirit. One spirit with seven different ministries.

If you had a choice to go to a church that's rich and self-powerful or one that's poor and depending on the Holy Spirit, go to the church that's Spirit filled.

That's probably what happened to the church in Sardis. They began to depend on their wealth, money, influence, power, and position- therefore they stopped relying on the Spirit of God.

The Antidote: The Holy Spirit, the Seven-Fold Spirit lives inside of you. You house the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead. Die to self; allow the Holy Spirit to flow through you, then the Spirit will be in the church.

Here is a question we will answer in Life App Groups this week.

Do you possess the Holy Spirit and does the Holy Spirit possess you?

Have you surrendered all your life to his leadership and enabling power?

WAKE UP! Wake up to the fullness of the Holy Spirit!

Zechariah 4:6 ...‘Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,’ says the LORD Almighty.

2. No Passion for Prayer

A prayerless church is a powerless church. Jesus said, “My house, should be a house of prayer!” The church should be fighting its battles from its knees.

Bold Next Step: This week I will honestly evaluate my prayer life.

Is my prayer life ____ Alive ____ Sleepy ____ Dead? What will I do about it?

WAKE UP! Wake up and pray!

3. No Ears for the Truth

2 Timothy 4:3 For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.

Itching Ears? “I only want to hear the good stuff. What makes me feel good.” “I only want hear the stuff that agrees with what I believe.” They don't want to hear about self-sacrifice and dying to self.

The Holy Spirit Comforts the Afflicted and Afflicts the Comfortable.

Which are you? A truth seeker or one who wants your ears tickled? WAKE UP! Wake up to truth.

4. Tolerance of Sin

Are you beginning to see how these seven different letters to the seven different churches have some common themes that build on each other? Ephesus – You left your first love. Pergamum - You are compromising with the culture around you. Thyatira – You are tolerating and sleeping with the enemy Jezebel and her teachings. Sardis – you are DOA.

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

Strengthen what little bit you have that's still alive and is about to die.

Repent. Change your way of thinking. That will change your heart. Then you will change your actions.

Revelation 3:3 Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; hold it fast, and repent.

Your faith is not renewed by learning something new but remembering something old.

Remember the grace of God, His goodness and faithfulness to you. Remember the things you used to do when you first fell in love with Jesus and do them again! WAKE UP! Wake remember and Repent.

5. Division, Factions, Infighting.

Some churches are full of politics and infighting. This has turned many of you off to church. Think about what your divisions are doing to your children.

1 Corinthians 3:3 You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere humans?

Quarreling Christians can kill a church. A divided church is a dying church.

WAKE UP! Wake up to love, forgiveness, and unity.

6. Stopped Taking Risks for the Gospel

Faith is spelled R-I-S-K. Faith is taking your first step when God hasn't yet revealed the second step.

BOLD NEXT STEP: What are you doing for Jesus that if he doesn't come through, you will fail?

The Warning

Revelation 3:3 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. This is not the Second Coming of Christ, rather this is Jesus coming to the church in judgement.

Like a Thief. Sardis sat high on a plateau, protected by ridges up to 1500 ft high, which created a sense of security and complacency. But- "Pride goes before a fall." Twice in its history, secure in a high acropolis, the city failed to watch its defenses. An enemy army came, and by stealth, took the city.

- In 549 BC, one of Persia's soldiers figured out how to climb the highest ridge (by watching a Lydian soldier!) and staged a surprise attack. It was as though Sardis wasn't even paying attention – like they were asleep.
- Over 300 years later, the Syrians did the same thing! Therefore, when Jesus told them to "Wake up" the people of Sardis understood it well.

The Encouragement

Revelation 3:4 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.

Only a few in Sardis who had not been soiled. A handful of faithful people. Most churches have them.

Revelation 3:5 The one who is victorious will, like them, be dressed in white.

- Jesus will clothe you with the white robe of righteousness, justify you just as if you never sinned and just as if you have always been obedient.
- The white garment was worn in Roman triumphs. The faithful Christian will participate in the victorious triumph of Jesus.

Revelation 3:5 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.

Your name is not only written in a state citizen-register, or on a church roll, or part of a family crest and genealogy. Your name is written in the book, the Lamb's book of life!

Jesus will bring our names before God the Father. He knows us as His friends and His brothers and calls each of us by name (John 15:13–14; Heb. 2:11–13; 1 John 3:1).¹

Do You Have Ears to Hear?

Revelation 3:6 Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Is your faith dead or alive? We want to be the type of church that awakens the sleeping and raises the dead!

¹ David R. Shepherd, SHEPARDS NOTES, Revelation(Nashville: B & H Publishing House, 1999), p. 27