

THE AVERAGE CHURCH IN AMERICA AND SARDIS

Revelation 3:1-6

Part One

Introduction:

1. Sadly, the average church in America is much like Sardis in many ways.
2. The average church wants to make a good outward impression, but the real state of the church is well-hidden under the guise of programs and activities that are not getting the job done for Christ.
3. As we enter these churches, our first impression is often not correct.
4. Here is a story about a man who loved to trade knives:
[A man returning from a big game hunt in Africa ran across an old friend. He pulled a little knife from his pocket and said, "With this knife, I jumped on a big tiger and cut his tail off with this little knife." His friend asked him, "If it is that good, why didn't you cut his head off?" The knife owner replied, "Someone else had already done that!"]
5. Our first impression is not always correct.
6. The church of Sardis was a wonderful first impression church.
 - A. Sardis had rich a heritage of over 200 years as a capital city known for rich and wise men.
 - B. The church made a good first impression, but in reality, there were few spiritual works going on.
 - C. As our Lord visited and evaluated this church, He looked through the fleshy first appearance right into the heart and skeleton of the church.
7. From verse 1, let's examine three things Christ saw in the church.

I. SARDIS HAD DEEDS.

1. They were very active and looked industrious, but the work of God was not being done.
2. No doubt they were quoting their beliefs, reciting their prayers, paying their bills, but the fire from heaven was absent.
3. This was a pleasure-seeking church that had all the programs, but lacked the power from God.
4. Folks joined the church at Sardis to be the recipient of the "holy ministries" instead of ministering in the power of God.

5. When their pleasure was interrupted, they were stirred up, but those around them could go to hell and they would never shed a tear.
6. The spiritual blind filled the pulpit and the pews.
 - A. Jesus explained it in Matthew 15:14 – ***Let them alone; they are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.***
 - B. Unless something happens, they are headed for a collision.

[We see the church's deeds, now Jesus speaks concerning]

II. SARDIS HAD A GOOD DISPOSITION.

1. The city rated them as an "on-the-ball church," but the world doesn't know the difference.
2. At first glance, they, like artificial flowers, looked real.
3. They weren't breaking up sin and causing a community uproar, so the community loved them because they posed no threat to this world's lifestyle.

[We see the church's deeds and disposition in the community but finally. . .]

III. SARDIS WAS DYING A COMMON DEATH.

1. When a church is filled with activities and busy constantly, they think they're doing great.
2. We must understand that there's a difference between doing church work and doing the work of the church.
3. When the Great Physician from glory reached down from heaven to the church body to check her spiritual pulse, he immediately pronounced her dead.
4. The crowd didn't know the difference between a dead church and a healthy one, but God did.
5. They needed the song entitled, "The Great Physician"
The Great Physician now is near. The sympathizing Jesus. He speaks the drooping heart to cheer, Oh! Hear the voice of Jesus. Sweetest note in seraph song, Sweetest name on mortal tongue. Sweetest Carol ever sung, Jesus, Blessed Jesus.

6. I Timothy 5:6 – ***But she that lives in pleasure is dead while she lives.***
7. II Timothy 3:5 – ***Having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof; from such turn away.***
8. Ephesians 4:18 – ***Being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart.***
9. Isaiah 29:13 – ***The people draw near to me with their mouth, and with their lips they honor me, but have removed their heart far from me.***
10. The Lord condemned outward appearances of religious activity that aren't directed by the Holy Spirit.
11. John 4:24 – ***God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him, must worship Him in spirit and in truth.***
12. Jesus condemned the Pharisees for being whitewashed sepulchres.
13. The sight of death is frightening enough, but to make something that is dead look alive is a frightening thing.
14. You'll never find the Gospel in a coffin nor the fires of revival in a spiritual refrigerator.
15. I Samuel 16:7 – ***Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart.***

Conclusion:

1. Let us never forget that churches aren't dead, but the church's spirituality is determined by the spiritual condition of each member.
2. If every member of the church were like you, what would the church's spiritual condition be?