

The Death Of A Church

Introduction. Just like God is everywhere and knows everything (Psalm 139:7-12), Christ knows His churches. When He addressed the seven churches, He stood in their midst (Revelation 1:13, 20). For example, Christ knew that Sardis was dead (Revelation 3:1). What would He know about us? We can see how we are doing by looking at the churches of Asia.

I. ***The Death Of A Church From Leaving The First Works***

- A. The Ephesians had left their first love (Revelation 2:4-5). There have been a lot of possible explanations put forth, but the most likely explanation would be a loss of steadfast devotion to Christ (John 14:15; 1 John 2:3-4).
- B. The admonition was to return and do the first works. There was a collective responsibility for all of us to love God and each other (Matthew 22:37).

II. ***The Death Of A Church From False Doctrine***

- A. The brethren of Pergamos held to the doctrine of Balaam, so open falsehood and compromise was being taught (Revelation 2:14-16).
- B. The New Testament consistently warns about the danger of false teachers and false doctrine (Galatians 5:7-8; 2 Peter 2:1-2). God's people have to be on guard against false doctrines within the church (institutionalism, creation, divorce and remarriage, open fellowship), and from doctrines within the religious world at large (Calvinism, Premillennialism).

III. ***The Death Of A Church From Public Sin***

- A. The prophetess Jezebel encouraged the brethren of Thyatira to commit fornication and idolatry (Revelation 2:20-21).
- B. With ungodliness like drinking, cursing, ungodly dress, and fornication, Christians need to feel the keenness of the tragedy of sin. They need a heart that is shattered by the reality of their sin in the context of their relationship with God.
- C. A congregation furthermore needs to "mark ... avoid," "deliver," and "withdraw ... from" the unrepentant to keep the church pure (Romans 16:17-18; 1 Corinthians 5:1-2, 6; 2 Thessalonians 3:6).

IV. ***The Death Of A Church From Weakness***

- A. The church in Sardis needed to strengthen what remained (Revelation 3:2). How do you strengthen a congregation? The elders, teachers, and evangelists must preach the word of God. There are churches that are starving for the Bible (Acts 20:32; 2 Timothy 4:2-4).

- B. As a result, they do not reach sufficient depth in their closeness to God. Members may identify themselves as “religious,” but they are not truly transformed by their faith in and relationship with God (2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 Peter 1:14-15).

V. ***The Death Of A Church From Failing To Evangelize***

- A. The brethren in Philadelphia had an open door before them that no man could shut (Revelation 3:8).
- B. Many churches will fold because they are not doing the work (1 Corinthians 16:9; 2 Corinthians 2:12; Colossians 4:3). If you refuse to plant, will there be a harvest (Matthew 9:36-38; John 4:29-30, 35-38)? This is paramount to a congregation’s existence.

VI. ***The Death Of A Church From Indifference***

- A. The Laodiceans were lukewarm, and were warned that they would be utterly rejected (Revelation 3:15-17).
- B. How would you like this said about you? The strength of a congregation has very little to do with the size of the congregation; it has to do with zeal and enthusiasm (Ecclesiastes 9:10; Hebrews 12:1-2). The Lord counseled them (and us) to repent (Revelation 3:18-19).

Conclusion. Sadly, all churches eventually die. None of the churches of Asia are still in existence. To be fair, some congregations succumb to environmental problems such as a town dying. But everything being equal, all we are trying to do is to prolong demise as long as possible. We have got to burn this into the heart of every generation. Will this congregation’s demise be blamed on this generation? We need a renewed focus. The best way to continue this great work is to observe the problems of first century churches, and remember that we cannot fight against just one. These churches were wrong because they were doing just one, so we have to cast off the wickedness of world and be a shining beacon of truth.

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