

# Thou Hast A Name That You Live But Are Dead

Revelation 3:1-6

Please open your Bible to the book of Revelation chapter three. Today I am speaking on the subject: *Thou Hast a Name That You Live but are Dead*. Revelation chapter three, verse one. Just before we look at the text, I need to urge everyone who reads this sermon to be of serious mind. I am afraid many of you are lost.

I need to remind you that only two groups of people exist in our world. The two groups consist of those who are saved, and those who are lost. In our text today we shall discover many who take part in the visible church are lost.

I must say, it is generally easy to discern the lost who live outside the professing Christian church. However, it is not so easy to discern the lost who profess Christianity, and thus have a name that they live, and yet are not born again.

Everyone participating in a Christian church needs to examine themselves. I fear much of the spiritual climate now existing in America fits the words of Christ found in today's text. Hear me well: *just because you attend a church that professes to be Christian does not mean you are a Christian*. I trust you will search your heart carefully as you listen today.

Now, may we read our text beginning at Revelation 3, verse one:

*1And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.*

*2Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.*

*3Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.*

*4Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.*

*5He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.*

*6He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*

Historians tell us Sardis was one of the oldest and greatest cities of western Asia. It was a proud, wealthy city located about 27 miles due south of Thyatira. Notably coins were first minted there, and the last prince of the city was considered the wealthiest man in the world. Like other cities in the region, it contained much idolatry. Eventually it was destroyed by an earthquake. Interestingly, extensive excavations at the site of this city reveal the Roman road that is there. A road most likely traveled at one time by the apostle Paul.

Sadly, the church in Sardis sank to a dire spiritual condition. Jesus said they had a name that they lived, but in fact they were dead! In name they were Christian, but the majority lacked the new birth and were spiritually dead. The condition of this church toward the end of the apostolic era typifies many professing Christians down through the church age, who as the Lord warned elsewhere in Scripture, embrace “a

*form of godliness (a form of our religion if you please), but deny the power (the authority) thereof.*” From such, the Bible says to “turn away” (2 Tim. 3:4-8).

Those who possess only a form of Christianity are no better off than the lost world around them. Like the world, they are “*ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.*” Rather, they resist the truth, are men of corrupt minds, and are reprobate concerning the faith. We are to turn away from them because they are not a part of the authentic church.

Again, from our text Jesus says to the unregenerate within the professing church, “*Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee*” (Rev. 3:3).

May I say this kindly: we need a whole lot of preaching to the church these days because our churches are filled with a few generations who have received the authentic gospel from previous generations of genuine believers, but who have not acted on that gospel.

I can say that with confidence because our Lord says he will “*come on them as a thief*” and “*they shall not know what hour*” he will come on them. Listen closely: *the authentic church is not in darkness and the day of the Lord’s return will not come on them as a thief* (1 Thess. 5:4).

May I ask you a question: *have you responded to the Biblical gospel, or are you a Christian in name only? Have you surrendered your life to Christ and are you now watching for His return?*

Again, Jesus says in verse three, “*If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief.*” The Lord Jesus is calling those in the visible church to a place of repentance. No one in the visible church has the right to water down the Word of God and turn from the authority of the Word of God and the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ.

No one in the church has the right to pervert what they were taught and what they have heard, rather they need to fully embrace and hold fast the “*word which by the gospel*” was preached unto them (Cf. 1 Peter 1:25b). Remember, therefore and repent.

Apart from personal repentance one is NOT watching for the return of Christ and such a person is NOT saved, regardless of participation in some form of church life.

In contrast to those in the visible church who have a name that they live but are dead, there are a few names which have not defiled their garments; and Jesus says, “*they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy*” (3:4).

Despite a worldly church that is busy abandoning the Word of the living God, there are a few who refuse to defile their garments. Those who know the Lord serve the Lord! Those who know the Lord do not ignore His call to personal holiness. Those who know the Lord keep their garments clean, that is, they have a heart to avoid sin. If you have no heart to avoid sin, then you are not yet born again. You may think of yourself as a Christian, but if you can openly serve sin, you are a Christian in name only. You are yet dead in trespass and sin!

Jesus says, “*He that overcomes, the same shall be clothed in white raiment.*” If you are going to live with the Lord Jesus in his heaven, then you must overcome the spirit of this world that bids you to enjoy sin for a season. You must overcome the spirit of this world that invites you to take sides against the Word of God and remain unrepentant. You must overcome the lie that you are a Christian when in your heart you have no desire to obey the Word of the living God.

## Conclusion

What about you? Do you have a name that you live, but you are dead? Is your heart surrendered to Christ? If not, your life will tell on you. Sadly, if you persist

in your religious but lost condition, one day the Lord Jesus will blot your name out of his book.

Now I finish with our Lord's words in verse 5: *"and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels."*

Perhaps you will disagree with me, but I understand the book of life in the following light. The book of life is not a roll of those who are saved, but rather a list of those for whom Christ died, that is, all humanity—all of Adam's race. Elsewhere, this book is known as the Lamb's book of life.

Jesus is the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world. In as much as he is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29) his book of life contains the names of every man and woman, all the descendants of Adam. However, only those who believe upon him have the promise found in Revelation 3:5. How wonderful it is to know that Jesus will never blot out the names of those who overcome the spirit of this world and confess him before men. On the other hand, all unbelievers will have their name blotted out of the book of life.

If there is any doubt in your heart about your relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ, I encourage you to settle the matter NOW. Bow your head and call on his name in a simple prayer. Tell him you turn from your sin and you are surrendering your heart to him. Ask him to save you and put your trust in him alone for your salvation.

He will answer your prayer, and he will save you (Romans 10:9-13).

Amen.