

Dead Church Podcast Notes

Acts Initiative

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Ep. 25 – So, Now What?

Throughout this series, we've been pointing out examples of ways that Christianity has become polluted and ways that it has strayed far from what Biblical Christianity – the Christianity of the book of Acts – was always meant to be. We have become a dead Church. It's time for that to end. It's time for us to repent and follow Jesus like he originally intended.

It's time that we become real Christians.

We've come to just accept and believe so many lies in the Western Church – lies about repentance, faith, love, legalism, condemnation, what the Christian life should look like, what it's like to have the Spirit, and even lies about the Gospel itself! It's time that we recognize what the apostles meant when they said the Church would become apostate.

Just like ancient Israel, and just like the Pharisees, the Church has largely become a group of people who honor God with their lips, but their hearts are far from him.¹ They are dead.

If we want to stop being dead, we must stop following men, and we must start obeying God.

Ancient Israel had the Law of Moses. It told them what God wanted their lives to look like. But instead of following what was clearly instructed in Scripture, they followed the teachings of their false prophets and false teachers.² The Church today has more than just the Law of Moses – we have both the Old Testament and the New Testament. All of it clearly tells us what God wants our lives to look like. And the apostles warned us that just like Israel had false prophets and false teachers, we will also have false prophets and false teachers.³

It's time we recognize that this is the reality we live in.

The question is: Are we going to follow the teachings of men, or are we going to strictly follow what Scripture directly says, looking into it ourselves without relying on some man to explain it to us?

If you've watched this series and you feel overwhelmed about how many lies you need to tear down before you can rebuild and figure out what the truth really is... don't be discouraged! The best place to be is in a place where you're aware that the Holy Spirit is the only one that can teach you, and you're asking questions.⁴

So, start asking. Keep asking.⁵ Keep searching for the truth – even if it's going to turn your life upside-down. And when you do learn something, when you do see the Bible showing you some way your life needs to change, don't wait to have everything else figured out. Do that thing that you already know from Scripture. Don't hesitate. Be all in.

We named this series *Dead Church* because that was the description Jesus gave to the church in Sardis who had the reputation for being alive.⁶ The Church in the Western world has the same reputation; everyone looks at it and thinks it represents what Christianity really is. Many people within

¹ Ref. Isaiah 29:13; Jeremiah 12:2; Matthew 15:3-9; Mark 7:6-8

² Ref. Isaiah 3:12; Jeremiah 8:8-9, 14:14-16, 23:9-32; Lamentations 2:14; Ezekiel 13; Micah 2:6-11; Malachi 2:8

³ Ref. Matthew 7:15-20, 24:11, 24:24-25; Acts 20:29-31; 2 Timothy 4:3-5; 2 Peter 2

⁴ Ref. Matthew 23:8; John 14:26, 16:12-14; 1 John 2:26-27

⁵ Ref. Matthew 7:7-11; Luke 11:9-13; Hebrews 11:6

⁶ Ref. Revelation 3:1-6

the Church think they're alive because they compare themselves to everyone around them. But Jesus said, "You have a reputation that you are alive, but really you are dead... I have found that what you are doing is less than what my God wants."⁷

If we decide what to do by comparing ourselves to everyone around us, then we might find out that what we're doing is not what God wants.

Why is the modern Church dead? It's dead because it still holds onto what it thinks is life. If you want true life, you must die.⁸ Jesus said that if we want to find life, we must lose our lives. We can only enter life with Jesus if we first decide to stop living in death.

Jesus didn't leave Sardis without hope. He called them to repent – to change their lives and live for him.⁹

When you look at your own life, do you see someone who has completely rejected this world? Do you see someone who has given up the cares of this life, the riches, the possessions, the comfort, the entertainment, the pleasures, and the wisdom of this world? Do you see someone who has died and has been raised into new life as a new creation with a new nature? Are you different from the world around you? Truly different – not just calling yourself different because the Church always calls themselves different? Would the world look at you and think you are crazy? Would the religious Church look at you and think you are radical? Can you honestly say – just between you and God – that you are only concerned about the Kingdom of God, that it's all you care about, all you think about, and the only thing driving you in every decision you make?¹⁰ Can you honestly say that you've laid everything down? Are you like Jesus' disciples who dropped everything – their livelihood, their families, and their friends – to follow Jesus?¹¹

If you can't honestly say that you are radically living for the Kingdom of God, then why aren't you?

What is it that you're not convinced about yet? What is it that makes you think it's not valuable enough to give up everything like the man in Jesus' parables did?¹² What is more important to you than having life?

If you read the book of Acts and want to have the kind of life you see in those stories, the answer is simple: Repent of the old life, stop being focused on this life, and just start obeying.

The only way for a dead Church to come alive is for the dead Church to die – to die with Jesus and resurrect with him into true life.

But don't wait! When God sent the prophets to ancient Israel, he gave them a chance to repent, but he also gave them a time limit. He told them that the day of the Lord was coming.¹³ Similarly, Jesus may have given Sardis hope – he gave them a chance to repent – but he also gave them a time limit. He told them that if they didn't repent, he would come like a thief in the night against them.¹⁴

The dead Church has an opportunity to repent – an opportunity to change everything and get their lives in line with what God wants. But there's a day coming, and it will not delay. If the dead Church does not repent, the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night, and it will be a day of judgment against the very same people who are eagerly awaiting his return.

⁷ Revelation 3:1-2

⁸ Ref. Matthew 10:38-39, 16:24-25; Mark 8:34-35; Luke 9:23-24, 14:27, 17:33; John 12:2-25, 15:12-13; Romans 6:1-14; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; Galatians 2:19-21, 6:14-15; Ephesians 4:22-24; Colossians 2:11-12, 2:20, 3:1-3, 3:9-10

⁹ Ref. Revelation 3:3

¹⁰ Ref. Matthew 6:33; Luke 12:31; Romans 12:1-2, 14:7-8; 1 Corinthians 4:9-16, 7:29-35, 10:31-11:1; 2 Corinthians 5:9-11, 5:15; Galatians 1:10; Philippians 2:17, 3:7-11; Colossians 3:2; Titus 3:14; 1 Peter 1:13-25, 2:11-12

¹¹ Ref. Matthew 4:17-22; Mark 1:16-20; Luke 5:1-11, 5:27-28

¹² Ref. Matthew 13:44-46

¹³ Ref. Joel 1:15, 2:1-2; Amos 5:18-20

¹⁴ Ref. Revelation 3:3

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“How terrible it will be for you who want the day of the LORD to come. Why do you want that day to come? It will bring darkness for you, not light... it will be deep gloom, not brightness.”¹⁵

“I know your works. You have a reputation that you are alive, but really you are dead. Wake up! Strengthen what you have left before it dies completely. I have found that what you are doing is less than what my God wants. So do not forget what you have received and heard. Obey it, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you...”¹⁶

“I know your works, that you are not hot or cold. I wish that you were hot or cold! But because you are lukewarm – neither hot, nor cold – I am ready to vomit you out of my mouth. You say, ‘I am rich, and I have become wealthy and do not need anything.’ But you do not know that you are really miserable, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked. I advise you to buy from me gold refined by fire so you can be truly rich. Buy from me white clothes so you can be clothed and so you can cover your shameful nakedness. Buy from me medicine to put on your eyes so you can truly see.

“I rebuke and discipline those whom I love. So be eager to do right, and repent. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in and eat with you, and you will eat with me.

“Those who overcome will sit with me on my throne in the same way that I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne.

“Everyone who has ears should hear and obey what the Spirit says to the churches.”¹⁷

¹⁵ Amos 5:18, 20

¹⁶ Revelation 3:1-3

¹⁷ Revelation 3:15-22