

Don't Panic!

by Wayne Goff

Churches which claim allegiance to Jesus Christ are dying across America in startling numbers. One preacher announced: "Once every six days, a Church of Christ closes its doors forever." Now I'm not sure where he got that statistic, but 21st Century Christian administrator Carl Royster said that 395 churches ceased to exist between 2010 and 2020. Membership has dropped by about 10% nationwide – more in some places, less in others.

So is it time to panic? We need to realize that churches come and go in the world. The seven churches of Asia (**Revelation 2-3**) all died out eventually. Nations, cultures and people shift endlessly on this poor globe of ours. And churches can **cease to exist** long before their doors close! Jesus warned that He would take the church's "*candlestick*" or "*lamp stand*" away if the church did not **repent!** In other words, Jesus will remove His stamp of approval on churches that are dead or dying.

The spiritual apostates will cry for change in the form of new names, new acts of worship, and new programs that conform to the ever-changing tide of human opinion. That is absolutely the wrong thing to do! Denominations are dying just as quickly as churches of Christ, so mimicking them is not the right move. "*Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it...*" (**Psalm 127:1**).

The solution is to determine whether or not each local church is dead or alive. Read the letters to the seven churches of Asia in Revelation 2-3 and see if the local church is guilty or innocent. If there is a problem, then resolve it biblically. If all is well and the church is spiritually active, biblically faithful, and lovingly zealous, then the numbers will take care of themselves.

It may be that faith in Christ is what is dying. We may have been blessed superabundantly to the point where we think we do not need Jesus Christ anymore. Some people and some nations cannot stand prosperity. God will "cut down" the godless nations in His own time, and raise up another more righteous in its place. "*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord*" (**1 Corinthians 15:58**). Is that you? Is that me? Is that us? Jesus Christ knows and rewards or punishes accordingly.

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